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ABSTRACT

Project Real World, a self-contained, activity-based Canadian consumer science program, provides students with systematic instruction in economic living skills. It gives students in grades 10-12 an orientation to the economic realities and opportunities in society. The program helps students function effectively within the rapidly changing marketplace; manage personal and financial resources; apply personal values, citizenship responsibilities and social, economic, and environmental considerations; act responsibly as consumer-citizens; participate in economic/government systems; and recognize enterpreneurship career opportunities. This module, the second in a series of five, contains three sections: (1) focus on the individual--needs and wants, values, adult roles, lifestyle, and influences; (2) decision making and problem solving in everyday life; and (3) conservation. Each section may contain an introduction, purpose, scope, "for the teacher," related content, choices and challenges, and activities. Many activities are community oriented. Decision making, resource management, and citizen participation are emphasized. The activities in the core program are identified in the table of contents. Sections and individual activities can be used as supplements to business education, home economics, law, economics, social studies, or mathematics topics. Transparency masters and two appendices containing a list of resource organizations and tips for working in small groups are included. (NLA)

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A PUBLICATION OF THE FEDERAL PROVINCIAL CONSUMER EDUCATION AND PLAIN LANGUAGE TASK FORCE

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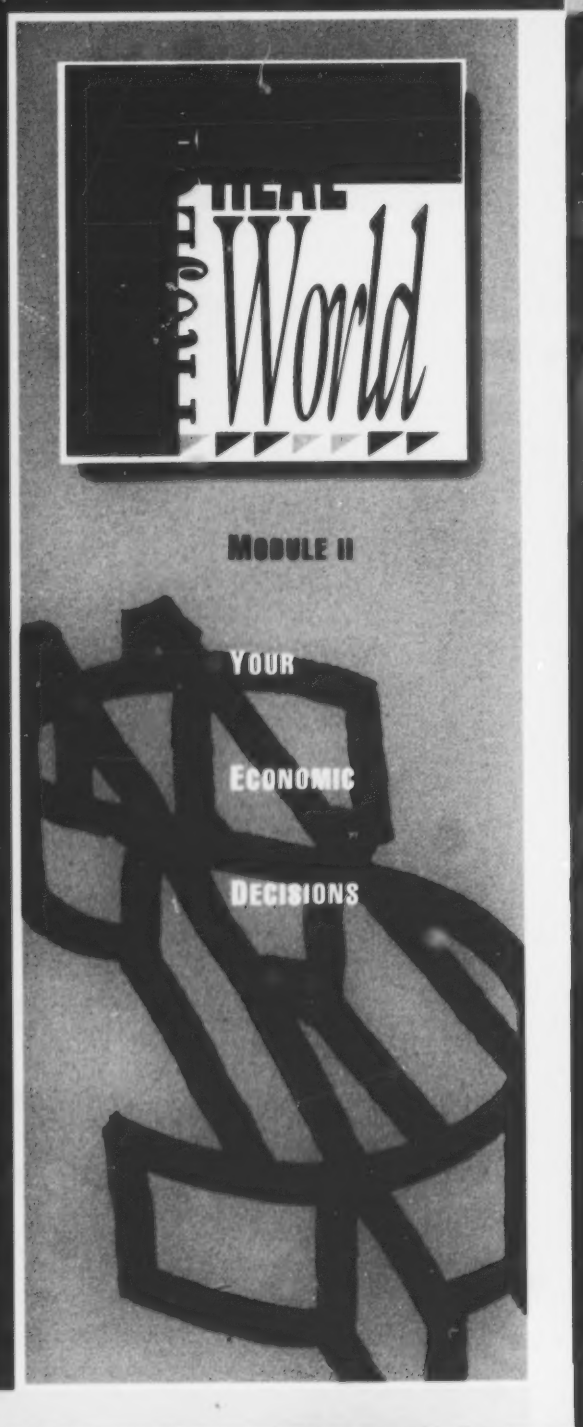

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PROJECT REAL WORLD

ECONOMIC LIVING SKILLS FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

An activity-based resource to orient young people to the realities and opportunities of the marketplace.

A publication of the Federal/Provincial Consumer Education and Plain Language Task Force

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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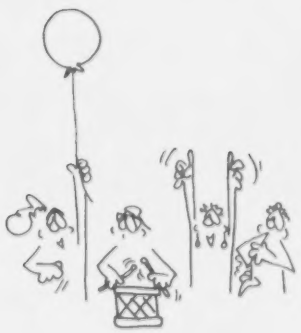

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PROJECT REAL WORLD
ECONOMIC LIVING SKILLS FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Why Marketplace Education?
We live in a complex, market-based society. Every day, each of us interacts in a hundred different ways in the marketplace — managing our money, deciding on a purchase, dealing with a landlord, advising a manufacturer about a faulty product, or working in the service or retail industry. The marketplace plays a central and vital role in all Canadians' lives. In fact, it is in the marketplace, more than in any other area of our society, where we are most challenged to function effectively and contribute productively.

Technological advances and ongoing economic and social change mean that Canadian society and the marketplace will become even more complex as each year passes.

Some recent trends which have shaped today's marketplace include:
- **technological advances** such as electronic banking and automatic tellers, credit and debit cards, electronic scanners and UPC codes, and electronic gas pumps;
- **a rapid increase in the number of products and services available** - close to 1,500 new food products become available each year;
- **the increasing sophistication of marketing techniques** - for example, telemarketing and TV shopping;
- **the tremendous influence of advertising** - the average Canadian sees or hears close to 1,500 ads per day;
- **the increasing technical and chemical complexity of common household items** - today the average home has more chemicals under the kitchen sink (cleaning products) than were in a chemistry lab 50 years ago;
- **the increased earning and spending power of children and young people** - Canadian youth (15 to 23 years) spend $3.5 billion a year in the marketplace;
- **the increasing concern about environmental protection** - many consumers think about how the products they buy will affect the environment.

Today's consumer requires greater knowledge and a broader range of skills than ever before. Acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills is too important to be left to chance. Young people will be best equipped to participate effectively in Canada's dynamic and changing marketplace if they are provided with systematic instruction in marketplace education.

What is Project Real World?

Project Real World provides students with systematic instruction in economic living skills. It is a practical, relevant resource to provide high school students in grades 10 to 12 with an orientation to the economic realities and opportunities of our society.

The program will help students to:

1. Prepare for and function effectively within the rapidly changing marketplace;
2. Manage their personal and financial resources;
3. Make educated choices which reflect personal values; citizenship responsibilities; and social, economic and environmental considerations;
4. Understand their rights and responsibilities as consumer-citizens;
5. Participate effectively in economic and government systems; and
6. Recognize the importance of entrepreneurship in the marketplace and the career opportunities it affords.

Project Real World is made up of five separate modules:

1. **The Canadian Marketplace and You**
2. **Your Economic Decisions**
3. **Resource Management Skills - What Money Can't Buy**
4. **Entrepreneurship and the World of Work**
5. **Citizen Participation in Canada's Market-Based Society**

Project Real World can be used in its entirety as a separate course. The activities which make up a core program are identified in bold type in the Table of Contents. As well, sections and individual activities can be used as supplements to subjects such as Business Education, Home Economics, Law, Economics, Social Studies, or Mathematics.

Project Real World is an activity-based program not a textbook. It has been designed so that students are participating and involved, having fun while they learn basic concepts and achieve fundamental understandings about the marketplace and their role in it.

Many of the activities are community-oriented. They will take students out of the classroom and into the community where they live. They will also bring members of the community into the classroom. Whether students are learning in the classroom or in the community, the program requires them to use processes which simulate those needed to deal effectively with "real-life" situations.

Each module contains more activities than any one teacher will use in exploring a concept. This is intentional so that teachers can choose those activities which best meet the needs, interests and circumstances of their students. Teachers are encouraged to adapt and modify the activities as needed.

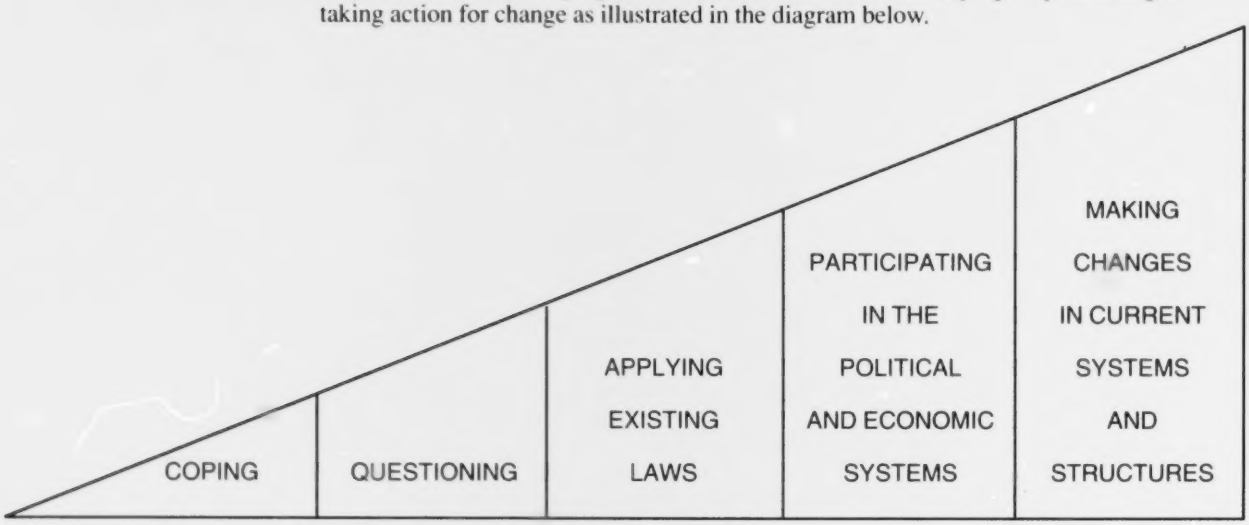
Finally, the resource is self-contained. Teachers will find all the background information they require in the "For the Teacher" section which accompanies each section.

Project Real World is Being Used Across Canada

Project Real World was developed cooperatively by six Canadian provinces. It is being used across Canada. For this reason, some sections (those relating to consumer law, for example) are written without province by province detail. Contact your provincial department of consumer affairs (the name varies slightly from province to province) to get information on the consumer laws in your province.

Project Real World's Theoretical Framework

The scope of **Project Real World** is broader than many traditional Consumer Studies programs which are often limited to teaching students to shop wisely. **Project Real World** is designed to prepare students to take an active role in influencing and shaping the marketplace. It addresses a progression of consumer skills from coping to questioning to taking action for change as illustrated in the diagram below.



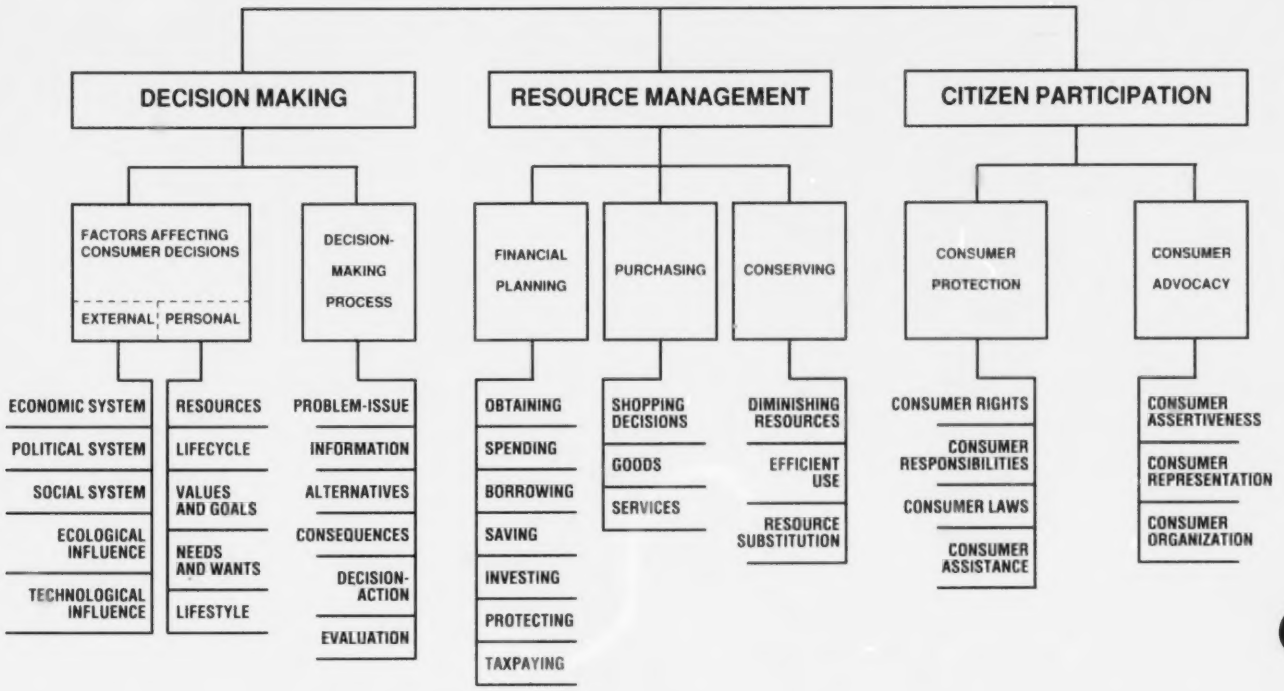
Accordingly, it includes sections on the economy, and on the political and social influences in the marketplace. It includes sections on both earning and spending money and provides students with information about how individuals and groups can bring about change.

There is heavy emphasis on decision-making throughout **Project Real World**. Decision-making, based upon personal priorities, is the key to making marketplace choices and to effecting change in the marketplace and in the economic system.

The conceptual framework upon which **Project Real World** is based appears on the next page.

Classification of Concepts in Marketplace Education

Marketplace Education is the process of gaining the knowledge and skills needed to manage economic and personal resources and take actions to influence the marketplace



Source: Charles Monsma and Rosella Bannister
Classification of Concepts in Consumer Education. South-Western Publishing, 1982. Used with permission.

PROJECT REAL WORLD
ECONOMIC LIVING SKILLS FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

OUTLINE OF CONTENTS

I. THE CANADIAN MARKETPLACE AND YOU

A. The Canadian Marketplace
- Change
- Technology and the Marketplace
- The Marketplace and the Environment

B. The Consumer and the Economy
- The Economic System
- Interdependence
- Economic Problems

C. Political and Social Systems Influence the Marketplace
- Government: Public Policy, Regulations, Interest Groups
- Society and the Individual: Roles, Cultural Values and Quality of Life
- Social Change: Households and Workplace
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II. YOUR ECONOMIC DECISIONS

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- Values and Goals
- Adult Roles, Responsibilities, Choices and Freedoms
- Influences: Advertising, Peers, Family and Resources
- Lifestyle

B. Decision-Making & Problem Solving in Everyday Living
- The Decision-Making Process
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  - Consequences
  - Action - Trade-offs
  - Evaluation
- Everyday Decisions

C. Choose To Conserve
- Becoming Aware
- What You Can Do

III. RESOURCE MANAGEMENT SKILLS - WHAT MONEY CAN'T BUY

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- Spending Plan - Record Keeping
- Savings and Investment
- Banking
- Credit
- Insurance
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B. Shopping Skills
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  - Food
  - Clothing
  - Housing
  - Furniture, Appliances and Electronic Equipement
  - Transportation
  - Recreation and Leisure
- Comparison Shopping

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- Motivation
- Self-Confidence Assessment
- Skill Inventory
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B. Career Planning
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- Looking At All the Options
- The World of Work Is Changing
- Women in the World of Work
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- Changing Careers and Lifelong Learning
- Your Career Plan

C. Entrepreneurship
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- Business Management
- Co-operative Entrepreneurship
- Social Responsibility and Business

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  - Behaviour (Relationships)
  - Dress
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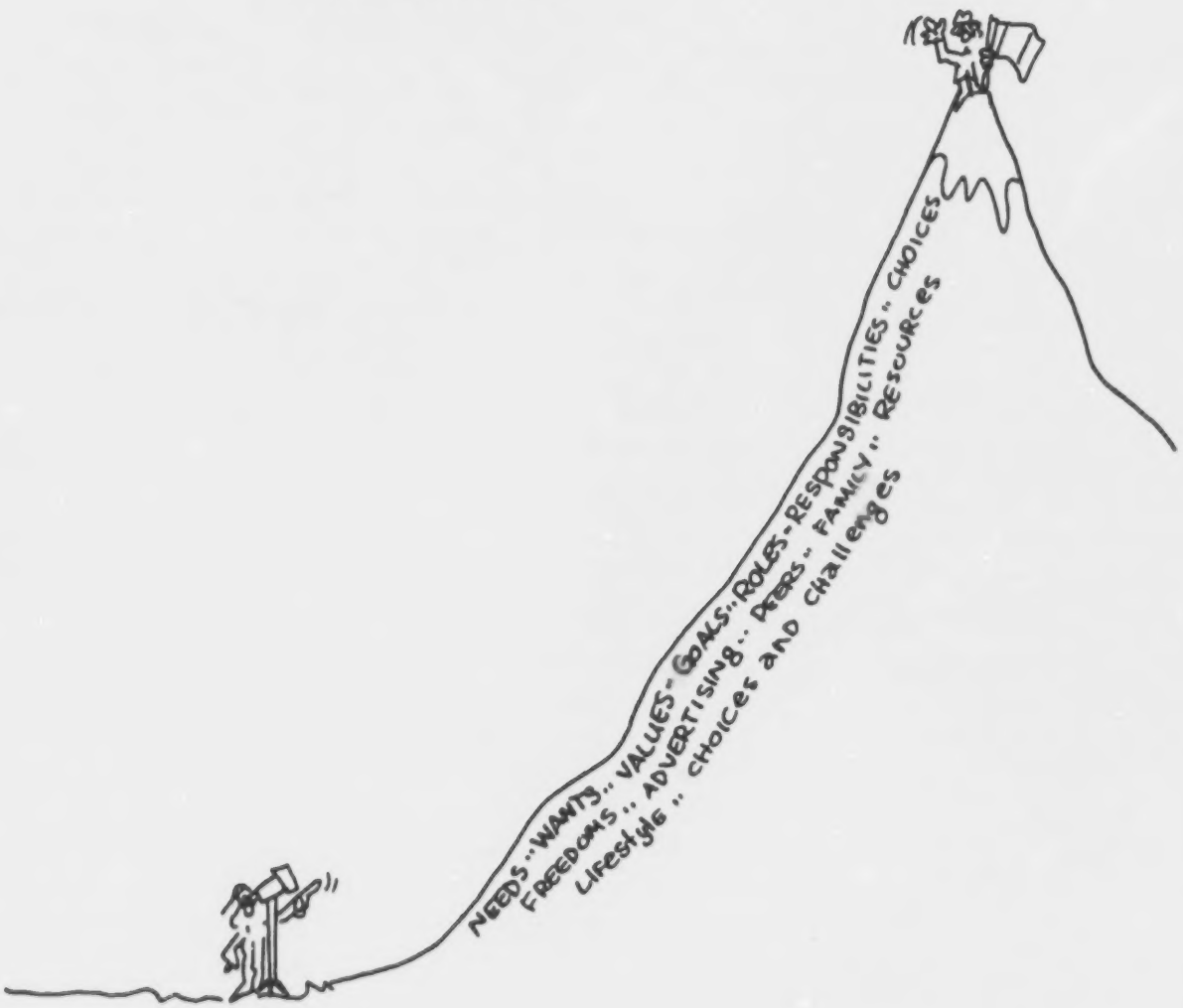
- The Right to be Informed/The Responsibility to Be Aware
- The Right to Choose/The Responsibility to Think Independently
- The Right to Be Heard/The Responsibility to Speak Out
- The Right to Redress/The Responsibility to Complain
- The Right to Consumer Education/
  The Responsibility to be a Competent and Ethical Consumer
- The Right to a Healthy Environment/
  The Responsibility to Protect and Respect the Environment

B. Consumer Protection Laws
- Consumer Protection Laws
- Consumer Assistance

C. Making Yourself Heard: The Consumer Citizen
- Consumer Assertiveness
- Consumer Representation and Organization

MODULE II

YOUR ECONOMIC DECISIONS


NEEDS .. WANTS .. VALUES - GOALS .. ROLES - RESPONSIBILITIES .. CHOICES
FREEDOMS .. ADVERTISING .. PEERS .. FAMILY .. RESOURCES
LIFESTYLE .. CHOICES AND CHALLENGES

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Activities in bold type are recommended core activities to be completed when **Project Real World** is used as a full course of instruction.

FOCUS ON THE INDIVIDUAL

Introduction

The desire to get good value for money is one of the factors that influences the consumer decisions that people make. In addition, there are many other personal factors.

People have different **needs** and **wants, values** and **goals** and they choose different **lifestyles**. The consumer decisions that people make reflect these different priorities and these different views of what is important. For example, four people with an equal amount of money might choose to spend that money in entirely different ways. The first person might save it, the second might use it to pay for university tuition, the third might use it for a down payment on a new car and the fourth might spend it on a trip to another part of the world. Their decisions are different because they have different views of what is important and because they have chosen different lifestyles.

An individual's **responsibilities** influence his or her consumer decisions. People who have responsibility for children, a spouse or an ill or aging parent usually make different choices than do people without these types of responsibilities. Some people feel a heavy sense of responsibility to the larger community. For example, they may be very concerned about the environment or about the people who are starving in drought-stricken countries. Such a sense of responsibility also affects consumer decisions.

In North American society, everyone is subjected to a variety of other influences that affect consumer decisions. These other influences include **families** and **peers, advertising**, and the resources of **time** and **money** that are available.

Thus, a whole variety of factors influence each individual's consumer decisions.

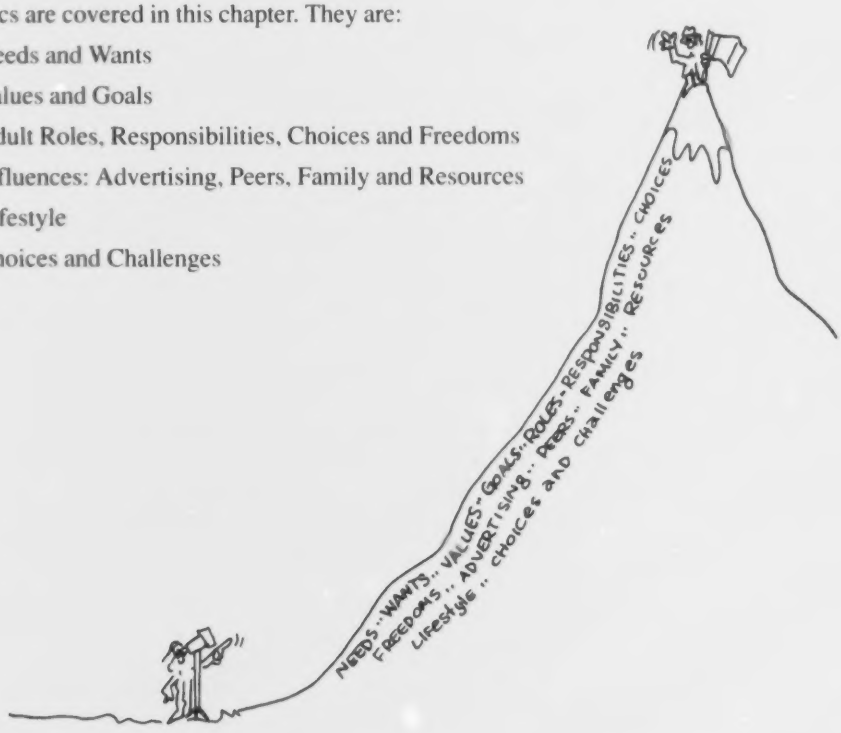
Purpose

The concepts emphasized in "Focus on the Individual" are factors which influence consumer decisions. The purpose of the chapter is to make students aware of these influences on their individual consumer decisions.

Scope

Six topics are covered in this chapter. They are:

1. Needs and Wants
2. Values and Goals
3. Adult Roles, Responsibilities, Choices and Freedoms
4. Influences: Advertising, Peers, Family and Resources
5. Lifestyle
6. Choices and Challenges


NEEDS :: WANTS :: VALUES - GOALS :: ROLES - RESPONSIBILITIES :: CHOICES
FREEDOMS :: ADVERTISING :: PEERS :: FAMILY :: RESOURCES
LIFESTYLE :: CHOICES AND CHALLENGES

1. NEEDS AND WANTS

For the Teacher

All human beings have similar basic needs. Our wants however, are as varied as each of us. How we satisfy our needs and wants - the decisions we make - depend upon our individual values and goals. Different decisions result in different lifestyles.

There is a difference between needs and wants.

Needs are often defined as things essential to human existence or fulfillment. Wants are those things which are desired by individuals but are not essential to human fulfillment.

In reality, the distinction between needs and wants is sometimes blurred. Needs and wants might be viewed as opposite ends of a continuum. Take clothing for example. A warm coat for the Canadian winter is clearly a need, a mink coat is clearly a want. But think about the situation where a teenager's old, but warm, hand-me-down coat invites teasing from classmates? A new coat is not a physical need but it may well be necessary for social acceptance.

In other cases, a particular item might be a need for one person and a want for another. For example, for a salesperson whose employer requires her to provide her own transportation, a car is a need. For a person who works downtown and lives half a block from a bus stop, a car may be a want.

We may choose to meet our needs and wants in different ways. One person may meet the need for praise and recognition by getting good marks, another by becoming an excellent athlete, still another by always having fashionable clothes and a new car.

Obviously, the different decisions that individuals make about the ways in which they will meet their need for recognition reflect different values and goals and will result in quite different lifestyles.

As well, different decisions about meeting needs mean that financial resources will be used differently. The person who meets her need for recognition by studying hard and getting good grades probably needs less money than does the person who chooses to become an excellent athlete and spends money on sports equipment and special sports camps. These financial choices affect lifestyle because they reduce the amount of money available to be spent on other things.

Related Content

Module I, The Canadian Marketplace and You; Chapter C, Political and Social Systems Influence the Marketplace; Topic 2, Society and the Individual: Roles, Status, Cultural Values, Quality of Life and Standard of Living.

ACTIVITY #1

UNDERSTANDING NEEDS AND WANTS

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

1. Describe in general terms the difference between a need and a want.
2. State reasons why, in differing circumstances, the same thing might be either a need or a want.
3. Give examples that show that individuals are subject to different influences which shape their needs and wants.

Teacher Preparation:

Have flip-chart paper available.

Time:

One class period.

Procedure:

Working with the class as a whole, ask students to suggest some needs and wants of people their age. At this point don't attempt to distinguish between needs and wants, just write suggestions on the board as they are given. Likely many of the suggestions will relate to possessions that students would like to have. Prompt students, if necessary, to broaden their thinking. Ask students questions such as these:
- Are there things that you need or want to do that we should put on this list?
- What about careers? Are there things that you need or want to be that we should write down?

When 20 or so suggestions have been written on the board divide the students into groups of three or four. Give each group three sheets of flip-chart paper. Tell them to write the things that are needs on one sheet of paper and the things that are wants on the second sheet of paper and the things they are unsure about on the third.

When students are finished categorizing the items on the board, have them develop a definition of a need and a definition of a want.

Give groups 15 to 20 minutes to complete this task, then ask the groups to tape their sheets of paper and their definitions on the board.

With the whole class, compare the lists, and ask students why all the groups' lists of needs and wants aren't the same. If prompting is necessary, ask:
- Do all of you have the same priorities in life?
- Do all of your parents have the same expectations for you?

At this point, it is enough if students recognize that they are all subject to different influences which affect their needs and wants. There is no need to be specific about the nature of the influences.

Then ask students why they had trouble categorizing some things as either needs or wants. If prompting is necessary, use the example of the new coat. A student might not need a new coat to stay warm, but might need it to be accepted by other students. Some things might be either a need or a want depending on circumstances.

Finally, using students' definitions of needs and wants develop a class definition all students agree upon.

Evaluation:

Listen to student comments and examine the definitions of needs and wants developed by the groups to assess whether Objective #1 has been achieved. Listen to student comments to assess whether Objectives #2 and #3 have been achieved.

ACTIVITY #2

PERSONAL NEEDS AND WANTS

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

1. Identify their own personal physical, social and emotional needs and wants.

Time:

One-half class period.

Procedure:

Discuss with students the difference between **physical, social** and **emotional needs and wants.** Physical needs and wants include food, clothing and shelter. Emotional needs and wants include the desire to be loved and the desire for security. Social needs and wants include the desire for social status and the wish to be part of a group. Write these categories on the board.

Have students work individually. Ask each student to write down at least one of his/her personal needs and his/her personal wants from each category.

Evaluation:

Since this is a personal exercise, student self-evaluation is more appropriate than teacher evaluation. At the conclusion of the exercise, simply ask students to think about what their list of needs and wants says about them as individuals.

Additional Activities:

1. Have students list a dozen things which they or their family have spent money on during the past month and identify whether each expenditure was to satisfy a physical, social or emotional need or want.
2. Have students list a dozen things they have done during the past week and identify the need or want being met by each activity.

ACTIVITY #3

BORN TO SHOP

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

1. Create a definition for the term "shopaholic".
2. Analyze some recent purchases to identify whether purchase were made impulsively and whether purchases were a need or a want.
3. Decide whether they can distinguish wants from needs, whether they are shopaholics.

Time:

One-half class period.

Procedure:

Brainstorm for a definition of the word "shopaholic". This term is usually applied to someone who goes on buying binges and shops indiscriminately, with little thought given to the need for the items purchased. Shopaholics have trouble distinguishing between needs and wants. Ask students whether any of them would classify themselves as shopaholics. Why?

Have students draw three columns in their notebooks. Illustrate this on the blackboard. Ask them to record the following information in the columns.

Column one - List 5 to 10 recent purchases.

Column two - Indicate whether each purchase was made impulsively or whether it was a planned purchase.

Column three - Indicate whether each purchase was a need or a want.

At the conclusion of the activity ask students to decide individually whether they can distinguish wants from needs, whether they would consider themselves shopaholics.

Evaluation:

To assess whether Objective #1 has been achieved consider the class definition of shopaholic. Does it emphasize indiscriminate buying and an inability to distinguish between needs and wants? Objectives #2 and #3 are best assessed through student self-evaluation.

2. VALUES AND GOALS

For the Teacher

People's values and goals influence their economic and personal decisions.

Values are the principles and beliefs that a person considers important. Many people consider friendship, good health, family life, education, success and financial security important. They might also value qualities such as honesty and fairness.

Our values guide us in setting our goals or the objectives we wish to attain. Usually our goals are closely related to our values. For example, an individual who values health and fitness may set goals such as avoiding drugs, establishing a personal fitness program, and eating nutritious foods. For a person who values education, a university degree could be an important goal. This person might be motivated to begin a savings program to pay for college or to commit extra hours to homework in preparation for further schooling.

Goals are the specific ways that you plan to make your values part of your life. For example if one of your values is physical fitness, your goal might be to work up to a 10 km run. Goals can be either short or long-term. **Short-term** goals are those which can be achieved in the very near future - a few days, weeks or months. **Long-term** goals are those which take years to achieve. For a high school student, earning the money to go to a rock concert is a short-term goal; getting more education is a long-term goal. Similarly, getting the latest compact disc is a short-term goal; getting a car is a long-term goal.

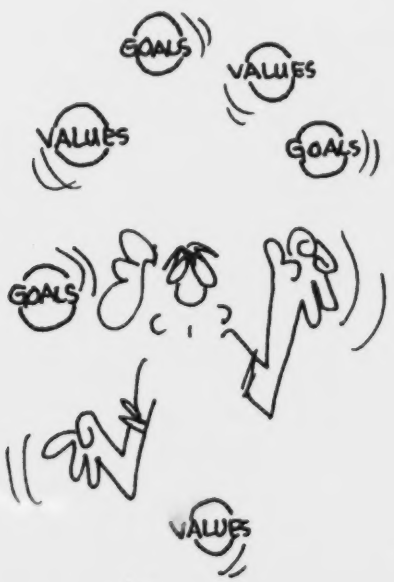
Our values and goals influence the financial decisions we make, our consumer choices, and our total lifestyle. A person who values education and has a goal of pursuing further training after high school will make different financial decisions and consumer choices and will probably have quite a different lifestyle than will the person who values immediate financial success.

Related Content

Module I, The Canadian Marketplace and You; Chapter C, Political Social Systems Influence the Marketplace; Topic 2, Society and the Individual: Roles, Status, Cultural Values, Quality of Life and Standard of Living.

Module II, Your Economic Decisions; Chapter B, Decision-Making and Problem-Solving in Everyday Life; Topic 2, Choices and Challenges.

Module IV, Entrepreneurship and the World of Work; Chapter A, Self-Inventory; Topic 1, Values, Goals



ACTIVITY #1

WHAT YOUR CHOICES SAY ABOUT YOUR VALUES

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

1. Interpret what their spending patterns tell about their values.

Teacher Preparation:

Duplicate a class set of the handout, "What Your Choices Say About Your Values".

Time:

10 to 15 minutes.

Procedure:

Distribute the handout "What Your Choices Say About Your Values" and ask students to complete it individually. This handout describes a number of situations in which students have to make choices about use of financial and other resources. The choices that students make provide an indicator of their values.

If desired, have students write a short paragraph describing what their choices on the quiz say about their values.

Evaluation:

Student self-evaluation.

STUDENT HANDOUT:

WHAT YOUR CHOICES SAY ABOUT YOUR VALUES

To accompany Activity #1, "What Your Choices Say About Your Values"

The way in which you spend your money reflects your values. Rank your answers to the following questions. Put "1" in front of the answer you like best, "2" in front of the second best answer and "3" in front of your third choice.

1. If you were given $500, what would you do with it?
   - ___ pay some bills
   - ___ save it
   - ___ buy something for yourself
   - ___ give it to charity
   - ___ other _____

2. Which would you most like to improve?
   - ___ your family life
   - ___ your looks
   - ___ the way you use your time
   - ___ your social life
   - ___ other _____

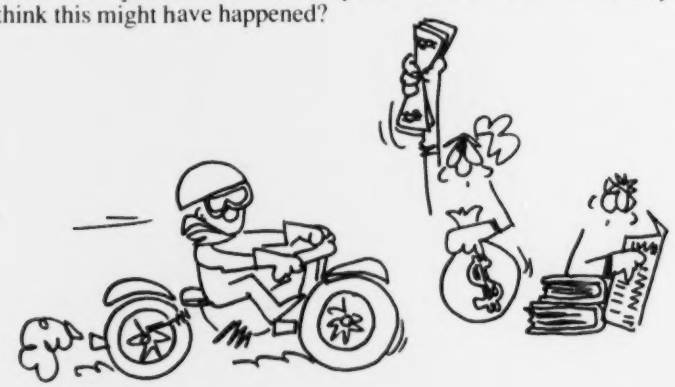
3. If you won a lottery, what would you do?
   - ___ live as you do
   - ___ really live it up
   - ___ give money to charity
   - ___ share some with family and friends
   - ___ other _____

4. If you had an extra $20, what would you do?
   - ___ order magazines
   - ___ buy clothing
   - ___ treat a friend to dinner
   - ___ other _____

5. In your leisure time what would you most like to do?
   - ___ spend time with family and friends
   - ___ do a craft or hobby
   - ___ play a musical instrument or sport
   - ___ take a course
   - ___ other _____

6. If you could have any job that you like which one would you choose?
   - ___ Prime Minister of Canada
   - ___ an artist
   - ___ a rich and famous movie star or singer
   - ___ a doctor working with starving people in a third-world country
   - ___ other _____

Share your answers with your classmates. Are your answers the same? Do they differ? Why do you think this might have happened?



ACTIVITY #2

THINKING ABOUT YOUR LIFESTYLE

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

1. Describe their preferred lifestyle.
2. Identify key personal values as indicated by their preferred lifestyle.

Teacher Preparation:

Duplicate a class set of the handout "My Ideal Lifestyle".

Time:

One class period.

Procedure:

Tell students that you are going to give them an opportunity to think about what they really want - about their ideal lifestyle. Ask students to close their eyes and form an image of what their ideal lifestyle would be like. Have them relax and concentrate on what they feel as well as on what they see.

Ask students the following questions about their ideal lifestyle:
- In what part of the country are you living?
- What is your home like?
- Are you working or going to school?
- Who are your friends? What are they like?
- Who are the members of your family? What are they like?
- How do you spend your spare time?
- What are your favorite possessions?
- What social/political issues will you be interested in?

Distribute the handout "My Ideal Lifestyle" and ask students to record information about their ideal lifestyle in the first column. Allow 10 to 15 minutes only. Then tell students to think about what their ideal lifestyle says about their values. This information should be recorded in the second column of the handout.

Conclude the activity by telling students that their visions of an ideal lifestyle reveals a great deal about their values.

Evaluation:

For this personal activity a student self-evaluation is most appropriate. Ask each student to individually assess whether the objectives for the activity were achieved.

Additional Activities:

1. Ask students to identify the financial and other resources needed to achieve their ideal lifestyle. In order determine the cost of each component in their lifestyle, they will have to consult with merchants and service people. They may also have to determine the cost of various types of post-secondary education in actual dollars and in lost income.
2. Have students write a paragraph describing their ideal lifestyle or create a poster illustrating it.

Source: Activity adapted from "Fantasy Trip", *Old Problems – New Direction: Teachers' Resource Guide*; Edmonton: Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission, n.d. Used with permission.

STUDENT HANDOUT:

MY IDEAL LIFESTYLE

To accompany Activity #2, "Thinking About Your Lifestyle"

My Ideal Life (What sort of lifestyle would make me feel most fulfilled?)	**What's Important to Me** (What does my ideal lifestyle say about my values?)
My Home	
My Work	
My Friends	
My Family	
My Possessions	

ACTIVITY #3

MY GOALS

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

1. Realistically assess the financial and other resources needed to meet specific goals.

Teacher Preparation:

Ensure that students have access to community resources. Duplicate a class set of the handout "My Goals".

Time:

One class period. One hour out-of-class research (optional).

Procedure:

Explain to students that goals can be either short or long-term. Discuss this concept with the class and ask for a few examples.

Tell students to identify one personal short-term and one long-term goal and to record these goals on the handout "My Goals". Then ask students to identify the time (when will the goal be reached?), energy (what has to be done in order to reach my goal?), and money (actual costs of all aspects of the goal) needed to meet each of these goals. Students may need to gather information from members of the community in order to assess the amount of time, energy and money needed.

Evaluation:

Examine students' goals and their estimates of time, energy and money needed to meet these goals. Are estimates realistic? When developing the estimates, did students consult with knowledgeable individuals? Since this is a personal exercise some students may be reluctant to share their goals. In this case, it would be appropriate for students to evaluate their own work.

Additional Activities:

If expansion of this activity is appropriate, ask students to explore what their goals say about their values. Exploration may be done through a class discussion or through individual writing.

STUDENT HANDOUT:
MY GOALS

To accompany Activity #3, "My Goals"

	Energy Needed (How long will it take to reach the goal)	**Time Needed** (What has to be done to achieve the goal)	**Money Needed** (Costs to reach the goal)
Short-term Goal (Can be achieved in days or weeks			
Long-term Goal (Can be achieved in months or years)			

3. ADULT ROLES, FREEDOMS, CHOICES, RESPONSIBILITIES

For the Teacher

High school students already have certain roles, responsibilities, choices and freedoms. Their roles include those of family members, citizens, and consumers of goods and services. Many are also wage earners. They may have responsibilities such as doing household tasks, caring for younger brothers and sisters or making a contribution to the family's income. They have choices and freedoms as well. They have the freedom to make many consumer and lifestyle decisions, a freedom which steadily increases as they move toward independence.

As high school students move into adulthood they experience changes in their roles, responsibilities, choices and freedoms and begin to assume adult roles such as:
- Consumers with the right to sign contracts.
- Citizens with the right to vote.
- Spouses (perhaps)
- Parents (perhaps)
- Homemakers - whether married or single, female or male they will probably be responsible for managing a home for themselves and perhaps others.
- Wage earners - whether married or single, male or female they will probably need to earn their own income.

As high school students assume new adult roles, their responsibilities change.

Adult responsibilities include:
- Meeting all of their own personal needs.
- Caring for a spouse and/or children (perhaps).
- Meeting the expectations of an employer.

Many individuals, both adolescents and adults, have a sense of responsibility to their community, their country and the world. This broad sense of responsibility can encompass a concern for the environment, for the economy and for people at home and abroad who are subject to injustice and oppression.

An individual's responsibilities influence his or her financial decisions, consumer choices and ultimately lifestyle. For example, the greatest need of a person with several young children may be to buy food and clothing for the children. This same person's wants may all center around providing an economically secure future for the children. The way that person spends money will reflect these priorities.

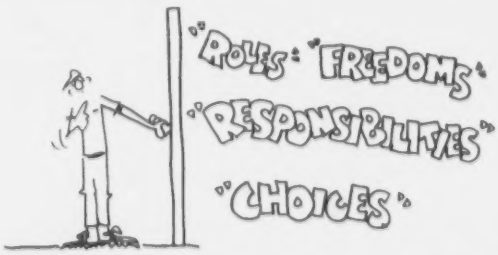
Individuals' broader sense of responsibility also influences their consumer decisions and their lifestyle. If we feel a keen sense of responsibility toward the environment, we might not view the use of products which contribute to pollution as either a need or a want. We will choose not to purchase products or to use services which are harmful to the environment.

Children and adolescents are usually under the supervision of their parents and teachers to some extent. When they become adults they assume responsibility for their own actions and have the freedom to control their own behavior and to develop limits and standards to fit new situations.

They have the freedom to choose their own lifestyle and to make decisions about how they will use their time, money, energy and other resources. Along with adult responsibilities and freedoms go adult choices. The adult role includes the making of a wide range of consumer and lifestyle choices which may have long-term financial and personal implications.

Related Content

Module I, The Canadian Marketplace and You; Chapter C, Political and Social Systems Influence the Marketplace; Topic 2, Society and the Individual: Roles, Status, Cultural Values, Quality of Life and Standard of Living.



Information on adult roles adapted from *Succeeding On Your Own* by J. L. Rieken and G. House, copyright 1986 Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., reprinted by permission of the publisher.

ACTIVITY #1

UNDERSTANDING ADULT ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

1. Identify the kinds of responsibilities associated with a variety of adult roles.

Teacher Preparation:

Make sure that flip-chart paper is available.

Time:

One class period.

Procedure:

Tell students that as they move into adulthood they will be assuming new roles. Write some of these roles on the board

- homemaker
- wage-earner
- employee
- citizen
- parent
- spouse
- adult child of your parents
- consumer

Give examples of the kind of responsibilities associated with one of these roles, perhaps the role of consumer. Consumers make informed decisions about their purchases and influence the marketplace in positive ways.

Next divide students into groups of three or four. Each group should identify the responsibilities associated with the other adult roles listed on the board. Responsibilities might be written on flip-chart paper. Give students 10-15 minutes for this task. Then as a class, discuss the roles one by one and ask representatives of the groups to show and explain their lists of responsibilities associated with particular roles.

Evaluation:

Examine the lists of responsibilities associated with the various adult roles. Do the lists accurately reflect the full range of responsibilities associated with each of the adult roles?

Additional Activities:

1. Many varitions of this activity are possible. Students might:
   - Analyze a movie, novel or short story to identify the responsibilities assumed by adults. Those responsibilities could then be grouped according to the various adult roles.
   - Identify the behavior associated with a particular role and develop a comical skit around that role. The skit might feature someone who is just out of school, has moved into an apartment and is trying to play the role of homemaker. Everything that can go wrong, does go wrong.
   - Interview someone who has been out of school for a few years and ask that person to describe the responsibilities associated with each of the adult roles.
2. Repeat the activity, but this time ask students to identify the kinds of choices associated with each of the adult roles. For example, choices associated with the homemaker role include choosing where you'll live and who you'll live with, setting your own standards of cleanliness in your home, deciding where you'll grocery shop and what you'll buy, deciding how your home will be furnished, etc.

ACTIVITY #2

FAMILY RESPONSIBILITY AND CONSUMER CHOICE

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

1. Explain how differing family responsibilities affect individuals' consumer choices and their use of personal and financial resources.

Time:

One class period.

Procedure:

Begin this lesson by talking about how family responsibilities influence consumer decisions. People who have a responsibility for another person often make different financial and consumer decisions than do people with no family obligations. Teenagers sometimes have family obligations and responsibilities which can affect the way they spend their money and use their time. Tell students to imagine themselves in each of the following situations:

- They are the single parent of a young baby.
- They are the oldest child in an immigrant family. They have three younger brothers and sisters. Their parents are taking English classes (but presently speaking little English) and are working at jobs that pay slightly above minimum wage.
- One of their parents has been out of work for a long time. The other works but at a low paying job. Family assets such as the car, stereo and television are gradually being sold to provide money for food and mortgage payments.

Write these situations on the board.

Tell students to first write half a page or so describing in more detail the circumstances of their life in each situation. Then they are to identify and write down the kinds of consumer choices they must make in each of the three situations. They might consider choices in regard to:

- items they spend their earnings on.
- their use of leisure time.
- their goals for the future.
- etc.

Evaluation:

Have students submit their work. Examine students' lists of consumer choices. Do students recognize that in each of the hypothetical situations most of their time and money will be used to meet family obligations rather than their own needs?

ACTIVITY #3

INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY - GLOBAL IMPACT

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

1. Illustrate how a sense of responsibility to the larger community can influence consumer choices.

Teacher Preparation:

Ensure that students have access to printed and community resources.

Time:

15 to 20 minutes for introduction. Two or three hours of out-of-class time for research. One class period for preparation of report.

Procedure:

Begin by telling students that many individuals feel a sense of responsibility to their community, to the environment or to some important national or global cause as well as to their families. This sense of responsibility naturally influences their consumer choices. Ask students to give some examples of consumer choices which affect the environment and write these on the board. Examples might include use of gasoline and other petroleum products, use of paper or plastic products or use of pesticides.

- Divide students into four groups. Assign the following topics to the groups:
- Consumer choices which individual high school students with a sense of responsibility for the environment can make.
- Consumer choices which families with a sense of responsibility for the environment can make.
- Consumer choices which communities with a sense of responsibility for the environment can make.
- Consumer choices which countries with a sense of responsibility for the environment can make.

Tell students that this is a major research project. They are to refer to library resources (magazines are a better source of information than books), consult with individuals in the community and write letters to environmental protection agencies for information on this topic.

After students have completed their research, each group should prepare a written report describing their findings. Students should identify their sources of information.

Evaluation:

Assess students' written reports. Was research thorough? Were information sources reliable and authoritative? Was the presentation well organized?

Additional Activities:

Students might take this activity one step further by discussing how they, as individuals, with a sense of community responsibility can influence the consumer decisions made by their community, their province and their country. Topics discussed might include the power of the vote, influencing politicians, forming lobby groups, joining interest groups, influencing the buying habits of others, joining boycotts, etc.

4. INFLUENCES, FAMILY, PEERS, THE MEDIA AND RESOURCES

For the Teacher

There are a whole host of other factors which may influence our consumer and lifestyle decisions. These include family, peers, advertising, and the personal and financial resources that an individual has.

Family
Our family exerts a very profound influence on each of us.

A family's values and lifestyle influence the children growing up in that family. Most often, children accept and follow the same value system as their parents. In some cases, children rebel against their parents' value system and will behave in ways which are quite opposite to the expectations of their family.

Peers
Although peers influence people of all ages, teenagers are perhaps more subject to peer pressure than any other age group. Our peers exert two types of influence. We want to be accepted by them, so we may deliberately behave in ways that we know will gain their approval. For example, if everyone else is buying fluorescent cycling shorts, we might too, even though we know they are not flattering. As well, we spend a great deal of time with our peers and often unconsciously absorb their values, beliefs and behaviours. Our peers' influence can shape our tastes in clothing and music, and our view of appropriate out-of-school activities.

The Media
The media includes television, newspapers, magazines and movies. Some people even include popular music when they talk about the media. The media has tremendous influence on people's consumer and lifestyle decisions. For example, movies and television programs which feature family life or interpersonal relationships give viewers messages about the appropriate way to behave with friends and family.

Programs in which everyone lives in big houses and wears expensive clothes can influence viewers to believe that these types of possessions are extremely important. Editorials in magazines and newspapers are intended to influence readers, but the print media influences readers in many other more subtle ways. For example, a newspaper can only print a certain number of stories. The stories that it chooses to print shape readers' views of what's happening in the world.

Advertising
The basic purpose of advertising is to influence consumer decisions and to convince people to buy the product being advertised. Many ads appeal to the our needs and wants, rather than emphasizing the benefits of the product. For example, a car ad that features a sophisticated couple in a luxury car is appealing to the need for status. A soft drink ad that shows happy people partying on the beach is appealing to the need for belonging. Advertising may attempt to convince us that we will be more self-confident, more accepted by our friends, or more personally fulfilled if we have or use a particular product.

Resources

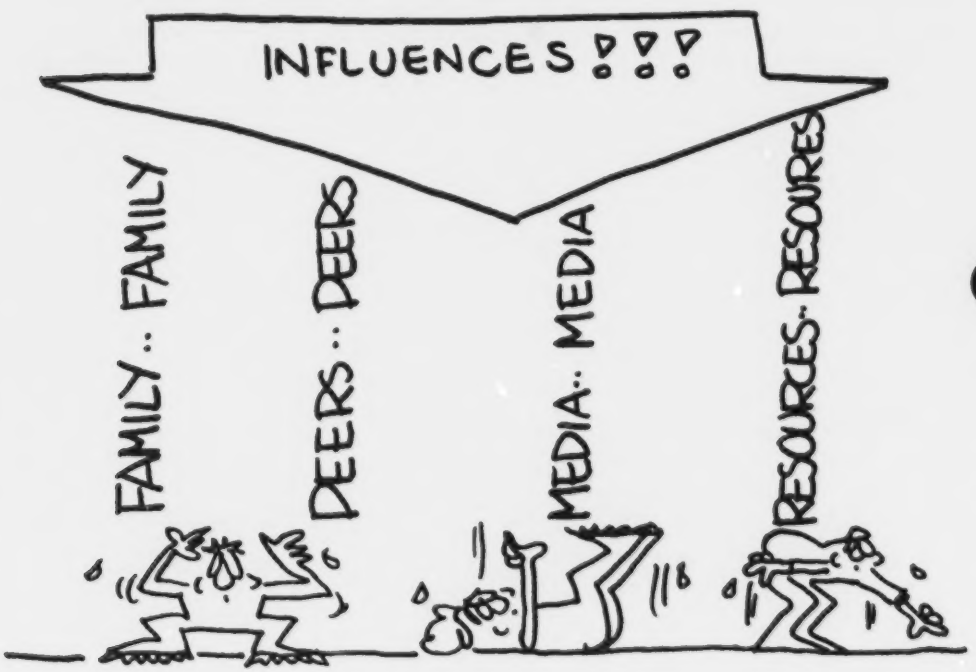
Individuals and families have resources such as knowledge, skills, time, money and energy. These resources influence their consumer decisions.

Obviously, the amount of money available influences whether a person buys a car (or any other consumer good) and the type of car purchased.

Time and energy have a more subtle influence on consumer decisions. They determine the amount of comparison shopping that a person does and, indeed, whether the person shops at all.

Knowledge and skills influence consumer decisions in two ways. Firstly, the more knowledgeable a person is about a product or service, the more informed the person's decisions about the product will be.

Secondly, knowledge and skills provide the basis for personal interests and hobbies and thus influence the type of products and services purchased. A person who is knowledgeable about music may choose to buy a high quality stereo system and many compact discs. A person who is a skilled carpenter will choose to buy the tools and equipment necessary for this hobby.



ACTIVITY #1

DO YOUR FRIENDS INFLUENCE YOUR PURCHASING DECISIONS?

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

1. Recognize situations in which their buying decisions were influenced by friends.
2. Use a repertoire of techniques to handle such situations.

Teacher Preparation:

Duplicate a class set of the handout "So...You Bought A White Elephant".

Time:

One class period.

Procedure:

Distribute the handout "So...You Bought A White Elephant" and give students time to read it. Tell students that nearly everyone finds themselves in a situation sometimes where their friends are pressuring them to buy something they don't really want. Ask students to think about one or two situations when this happened to them and then to write a brief description of these situations.

Ask members of the class for suggestions on handling this kind of situation. What can you do when your friends are pressuring you to buy something you don't want or when they are trying to get you to change your mind and to buy a different item than you originally intended?

Write students' suggestions on the board. Then as a class, discuss how the individuals in each of the case studies described on the handout might have handled the situation differently.

Finally, have students write a paragraph or two about how they might have handled the situations which were troublesome to them personally.

Don't ask students to hand in their written work unless they wish to do so, as this is an intensely personal activity.

Evaluation:

Student self-evaluation.

Additional Activities:

Students might role-play dealing with a situation in which their friends are pressuring them to buy something they don't want.

STUDENT HANDOUT

SO ... YOU BOUGHT A WHITE ELEPHANT

To accompany Activity #1, "Do Your Friends Influence Your Purchasing Decisions?"

Example 1
Nick's new hobby is raising tropical fish. His parents gave him $50 for his birthday, and Nick planned to use the money to buy books on the care of various kinds of tropical fish.

Nick took two friends shopping with him. As they walked to the shopping centre Nick's friends laughed at his hobby, calling it "stupid stuff" and urged him to "grow up" and "get with it".

By the time Nick had spent the $50, he had two new T-shirts and a record album. His friends liked what he had bought but Nick felt kind of empty.

Example 2
Jim's family planned a birthday party for his little brother. His mother planned the menu, and Jim helped his little brother plan the games.

The day of the party, however, Jim's mother was sick so she gave him the shopping list made up of potato chips, soft drinks, candy and ice cream. Jim's friend, Mary, who likes health foods, went shopping with him and talked him into making a different list. They bought the party food at her favourite health food store. When Jim's little brother saw what they bought, he started to cry.

Example 3
Lisa is in the fitting room of a department store trying on a dress for a party that night. She had seen the dress advertised in the local paper quite some time ago and saved for it. Now that she had it on, she thinks it makes her look fat. Two friends, who came along to help her decide, say it looks great and the salesperson agrees. But Lisa is still not sure. Her friends tell her they want to go home and get ready for the party and the salesperson says it's closing time.

Example 4
Amy's mother gave her money to buy new jeans. Amy went shopping with friends and bought a new wrap-around skirt instead. When Amy's mother asked to see what kind of jeans she bought, Amy told her she wasn't going to wear jeans anymore because her friends wear wrap-around skirts. Amy's mother angrily told Amy that she doesn't know who she is from one day to another.

ACTIVITY #2

MEDIA INFLUENCE

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

1. Summarize how most advertising attempts to influence consumers' decisions.
2. Evaluate the extent to which they personally are influenced by advertising.

Teacher Preparation:

Have students bring a supply of old magazines from home.

Time:

One class period.

Procedure:

Ask students for a list of reasons why advertising exists. Most of the reasons given will probably relate to the fact that advertisers are attempting to influence consumer decisions; they want people to buy their products.

Tell students that this activity will give them an opportunity to assess the extent to which they as individuals are influenced by advertising.

Tell students that each one of them is to select an advertising symbol or slogan from the ads in the supply of old magazines. Symbols selected might include the Pillsbury Dough Boy, the Jolly Green Giant, the Esso sign, etc. Slogans might include "Things go better with Coke", "Just do it", etc. Each symbol or slogan should be glued to a separate sheet of paper and the name of the product it represents written on the back.

Ask one student to be the quiz-master. The quiz-master holds up each symbol while the other students write down the name of the product it represents. At the completion of the quiz the quiz-master holds up each symbol again and reads the correct answers so that students can check their work.

Ask students to consider whether they are more likely to buy a product if they recognize the slogan or symbol.

Evaluation:

Assess whether Objective #1 was achieved by listening to students' comments at the beginning of the lesson. Do comments indicate that students realize most advertising is designed to influence consumer decisions? Ask students to assess Objective #2 themselves. On the basis of the quiz, how much do they think they are influenced by advertising?

Additional Activities:

A variation of this activity can be done with television jingles. Students can tape the jingles and then play them to determine the number which other students can identify.

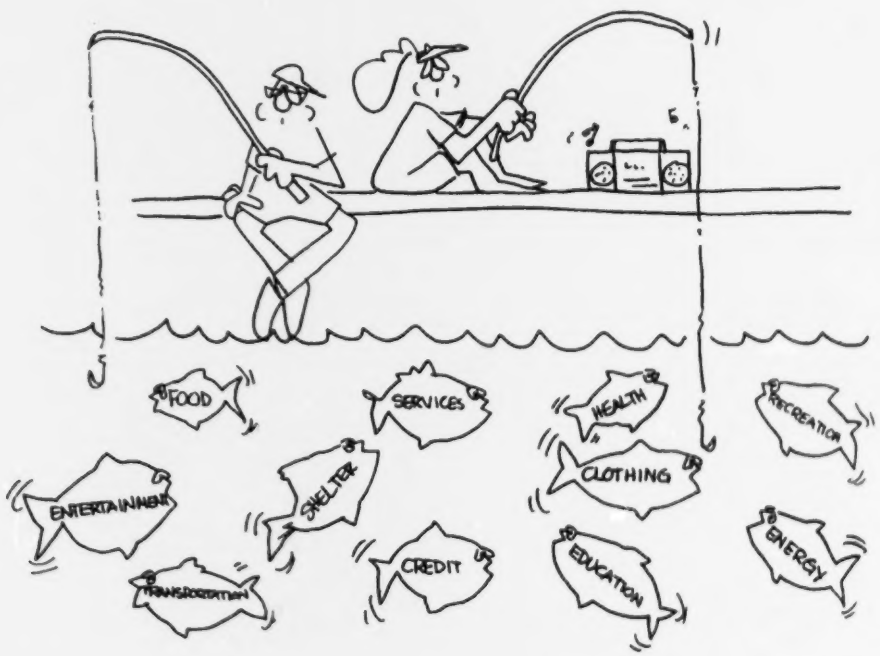
5. LIFESTYLE

For the Teacher

Our lifestyle is simply the way we live. It is influenced by our resources, roles, responsibilities, values, goals, needs and wants, family, peers and advertising. An individual's lifestyle develops out of the choices and decisions that she or he makes. Many aspects of our lifestyle are related to or affected by our financial decisions and consumer choices. These include: food, clothing, shelter, use of energy and other natural resources, credit, personal services, entertainment and recreation, education, transportation, financial protection, and health.

Related Content

Module I, The Canadian Marketplace and You; Chapter C, Political and Social Systems Influence the Marketplace; Topic 2, Society and the Individual: Roles, Status, Cultural Values, Quality of Life and Standard of Living.



ACTIVITY #1

RESOURCES AND LIFESTYLE

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

1. Identify some financial decisions which they personally have made relating to various aspects of their lifestyle.
2. Identify the cost and effect that those decisions had on their personal resources (time, energy, money).

Teacher Preparation:

Duplicate a class set of the handout "Resources and Lifestyle".

Time:

One-half class period.

Procedure:

Point out to students that we are required to make financial decisions about many aspects of our lifestyles. Some of these aspects include: food, clothing, shelter, energy, personal services (such as haircuts), education, transportation, health, charitable donations, and recreation.

Distribute the handout "Resources and Lifestyle". Have students complete it individually. They should identify one financial decision which they personally have made about each of the various aspects of lifestyle and then describe the effect of this decision on their personal resources of time, energy and money.

Evaluation:

Examine students' written work. Do students recognize that they have made financial decisions and consumer choices related to many different aspects of lifestyle?

Do they recognize that each consumer decision has implications for the use of time, money and energy?

Additional Activities:

1. Have students identify the factors which influenced their decisions relating to the various aspects of their lifestyle. The factors might include their values and goals, the influence of their family or peers or the amount of time, energy and money they have available.
2. Have students make a list of goods and services that can be purchased which relate to each of the aspects of lifestyle.

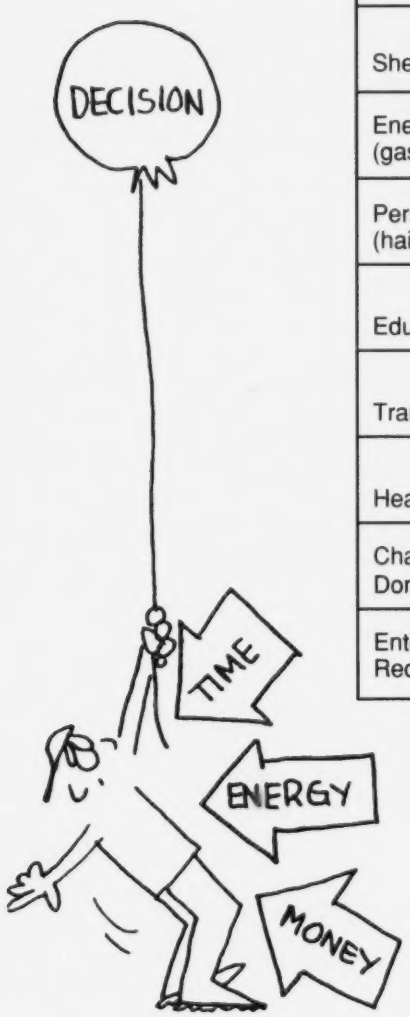
STUDENT HANDOUT:

RESOURCES AND LIFESTYLE

To accompany Activity #1, "Resources and Lifestyle"

Identify one financial decision that you have made recently about each of these aspects of lifestyle and tell what effect it had on your personal resources of time, energy and money.

Aspect of Lifestyle	**Financial Decisions**	**Effect on Resources** (time, energy, money)
Food	Eat lunch at a fast food restaurant	Cost $10.; rode a bike to restaurant; took one hour
Clothing		
Shelter		
Energy (gas, electricity)		
Personal Services (haircuts, etc.)		
Education		
Transportation		
Health		
Charitable Donations		
Entertainment/ Recreation		



ACTIVITY #2

CONSUMER CHOICES AND LIFESTYLE

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

1. Illustrate how the same amount of money, spent on goods and services, can result in entirely different lifestyles.
2. Identify some of the factors, (values, goals, peers, family, etc.) in addition to financial resources available, that influence lifestyle.

Teacher Preparation:

Have students bring old catalogues and advertising flyers from home. Ensure that students have access to community resources.

Time:

15 to 20 minutes for introduction. Two to three hours for out-of-class research. One class period for compilation of results and discussion.

Procedure:

Tell students that they each have $1,800 to spend. This amount is equivalent to the monthly take-home pay of a person who has just graduated from university or technical school and is beginning a career in business, education, industry or the skilled trades. Tell students that they have to decide how they will spend this money. They must take into account basic living costs such as food, housing, utilities, transportation and clothing. The prices they use for the items they decide to buy must be realistic. Students may study catalogues, visit stores, banks, travel agencies, beauty salons, etc. to price goods and services. They may also research charities, churches and political organizations which might require a commitment of both time and money.

Have students prepare a list itemizing all of the goods and services they will purchase with the money. Then have each student draw a cartoon which represents the kind of lifestyle that will result from those purchases. Cartoons can represent couch potatoes, athletes, travellers, etc.

Ask the class why their lifestyles differ even though the same amount of money was spent. If necessary, point out to students that lifestyle depends not only on amount of money spent but also on the choices made by individuals concerning the spending of that money. There are many factors which influence how people spend their money, including their personal values and goals and their family responsibilities.

Evaluation:

Have students submit their lists and cartoons. Assess whether Objective #1 has been attained by listening to students' comments when they compare their cartoons. Assess Objective #2 by analyzing the discussion which concludes this activity. Do students recognize that values, goals, family responsibilities, etc. influence lifestyle as well as the amount of money available to purchase goods and services?

6. CHOICES AND CHALLENGES

For the Teacher

The society that people live in profoundly influences their consumer decisions and their lifestyles, but the reverse is also true. When people make choices about the lifestyle they prefer and about goods and services that will enhance their particular lifestyle, they affect the larger society. This is particularly true when large numbers of people make the same consumer decision. One example is the automobile. Over the past 50 years the majority of people in North American society have chosen to purchase cars. This decision has created tremendous changes in our society. It has:

- made us dependent upon the oil producing countries
- contributed to increased pollution
- changed the environment
- made it easier to travel to other parts of the country
- created jobs for many people in the automobile and petroleum industries
- allowed family members to travel significant distances from home to shop, work and pursue leisure activities
- decreased the use of railways for transportation of people and goods
- increased the cost of road building and maintenance
- created new jobs for people in road building and maintenance
- increased the demand for medical services for those injured in auto accidents and those affected by pollution.

ACTIVITY #1

CHANGING SOCIETY THROUGH CONSUMER ACTION

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

1. Explain that an individuals' consumer, financial or lifestyle decisions affect society as a whole.

Time:

One class period.

Procedure:

Explain to students that so far we've been examining how various factors in society such as the media and other people influence an individual's lifestyle, financial decisions and consumer choices, but that the opposite is also true. When large numbers of people make a particular decision, they, collectively, affect society. Give the example of the automobile described in detail in the "For The Teacher" section which appears at the beginning of this section.

Ask the class to identify six to eight consumer choices which are common in Canadian society. Some possibilities include: fast food, environmentally safe products, television, vacations away from home, motorcycles, a university education, and trips to the movies. Write these on the board as they are identified. Then divide the class into groups of two or three and assign one item to each group. The group should brainstorm to identify as many ways as possible that peoples' decisions to use this particular item has affected Canadian society. Allow 10 - 15 minutes for brainstorming, then ask students to work individually. Have each student write a short essay on the theme "Our consumer decisions can change society". Most students will use the points raised during the brainstorming session to provide examples in their essay.

Collect students' completed essays.

Evaluation:

Assess whether the objective has been achieved by listening to student discussion during the brainstorming session and by reading students' completed essays.

Additional Activities:

Another way to illustrate the fact that the consumer decisions of individuals affect society as a whole is to reverse the situation described in the activity above. Have students suppose that, for some reason, millions of Canadians suddenly decide to stop buying fast food or going to movies. What would the effects on society be? Students can present their conclusions as an essay, a play, a short story or through a series of hand-drawn comic strips.

DECISION-MAKING AND PROBLEM-SOLVING IN EVERYDAY LIFE

Introduction

One of the keys to being a successful consumer is the ability to make planned, informed decisions. Good decision-makers do not toss coins or decide on the basis of impulse. They follow a process of defining the problem, collecting information, weighing alternatives and their consequences and thinking about the effects of their decisions. The six-step decision-making model presented in this section is an effective way of organizing the steps that should be followed when making a decision. It is a model that can be applied to any type of decision, from choosing a brand of toothpaste to deciding upon a career.

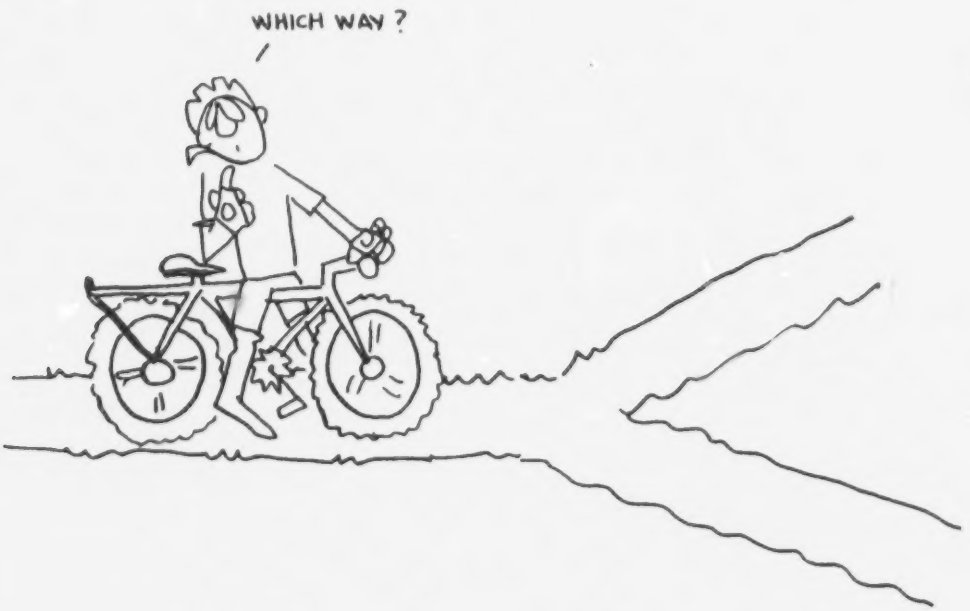
Purpose

The purpose of this chapter is to familiarize students with the steps of the planned decision-making process and to provide them with some practical examples of how the process is used in everyday situations.

Scope

This chapter includes three topics. They are:

1. The Decision-Making Process
2. Everyday Decisions
3. Choices and Challenges



Introduction adapted from Leet, Don R. and Driggers, Joann (1984). *Economic Decisions for Canadian Consumers*. Markham, Ont.: Wadsworth. Used with permission.

1. THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

For the Teacher

The late teen years are a time of decision-making for most young people. They must make decisions about education and careers, about moving away from their parents' home and about managing the earnings from their first real job. The bewildering range of options available and the complexity of the marketplace make decision-making even more problematic for young people just leaving high school.

Students who have basic decision-making skills are better able to handle the decisions facing them. Not all decisions are made consciously or systematically; in fact, there are four different types of decisions: the **automatic,** the **decision by default,** the **irrational** and the **planned.**

Most of our daily decisions are made without thinking or planning, they occur **automatically.** On a typical day we get up, go to school, attend classes, eat lunch without having to think or consciously make a decision about any of these processes. Most of these things are done out of habit, we merely continue with previously established routines or commitments.

A **decision by default** occurs when we choose not to make a decision and let fate take its course.

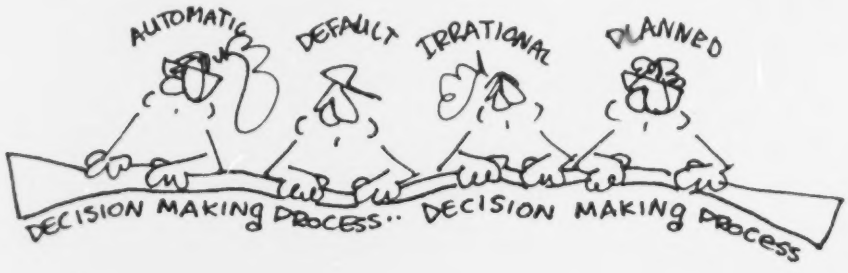
Irrational decisions are made on the basis of emotion without consciously considering the reasons for or against a choice. For example, a high school student may select a career as a lawyer because the lawyers on "L.A. Law" and "Street Legal" seem so glamorous and have such exciting lives.

A **planned decision** is one in which the person making the decision identifies the basic problem or goal, thinks of various solutions and weighs the pros and cons of each possible solution. Planned decisions usually result in more satisfactory results than do decisions made irrationally or by default. People who use the planned decision-making process can be sure that they've made the best decision possible under the circumstances.

The planned decision-making process has six steps:

1. **Identify the goal or define the problem.**
2. **Gather information about it.**
3. **Identify possible solutions/alternatives.**
4. **Identify the consequences of each alternative and make a decision.**
5. **Take action.**
6. **Evaluate the results of the decision.**

This process can be applied to virtually any decision regardless of whether it is practical, emotional or interpersonal. The steps of the process are presented in a linear sequence for convenience, but in practice people often move back and forth between the steps. For example, they might identify several solutions or alternatives but as they gather information they discover some facts which suggest other possible solutions.



Information concerning the four types of decisions has been adapted from: Brenneke, Judith Stanley and Hamill, Mary Lou (1985). Changing Times Educational Service and Visual Education Corp. Copyright 1985 by EMC Corporation.

ACTIVITY #1

DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO DECISION-MAKING

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

1. Categorize decisions according to the style of decision-making used.
2. Identify personal decisions as either satisfactory or unsatisfactory.

Teacher Preparation:

Use the master provided to make the Transparency, "Types of Decisions".

Time:

One-half class period.

Procedure:

The "Information for the Teacher" included with this section describes four different types of decisions: automatic decisions, decisions by default, irrational decisions and planned decisions. Describe these different types of decisions to students using the Transparency. Then ask students to make four columns on their paper, one for each type of decision. Tell students to write down all of the decisions they've made during the last three days under the correct headings and to put a checkmark beside the ones they're happy with.

At the conclusion of the activity, ask each student how many checkmarks s/he had in each column and then do a class total to find out which type of decisions are the most satisfactory and which the least satisfactory.

Evaluation:

Student self-evaluation.

Additional Activities:

This activity might be handled as a homework assignment, if desired. Ask students to keep a notebook in their pocket for a week and write down each decision they make under the appropriate heading.

TRANSPARENCY
TYPES OF DECISIONS

To accompany Activity #1, "Different Approaches to Decision-Making"

TYPES OF DECISIONS

- **Automatic decisions**

- **Decisions by default**

- **Irrational decisions**

- **Planned decisions**

ACTIVITY #2

THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

1. Work through the six steps of the planned decision-making process.

Teacher Preparation:

Duplicate a class set of the handout "The Planned Decision-Making Process".

Time:

One class period.

Procedure:

Explain to students that the most satisfactory decisions are usually made by using the planned decision-making process. Distribute the handout "The Decision-Making Process". Review the steps of the process with students using an example that will be relevant to students. Buying a leather jacket is used as an example below. During the review of the process, ask for student input at each step.

1. **Identify the goal or define the problem.**

   Is the decision really which kind of leather jacket is best, or is there another factor influencing your decision? Other reasons which might be involved include:
   - "I feel that I don't fit in at school. I think that if I had a leather jacket the other kids would accept me more."
   - "My winter coat is worn out and I need a new one. A leather jacket is just one of several options."

2. **Gather information about the goal or problem.**

   Assuming that the decision is "which kind of leather jacket is best?", the following types of information might be gathered:
   - What different styles and colours are available?
   - What is the price range?
   - Is there a difference in quality between the most and least expensive?
   - Do any jackets have zip-in linings so that they can be worn in winter?
   - Do any come with a guarantee or other consumer protection?

3. **Identify possible solutions/alternatives.**

   In most situations there is usually more than one possible solution or alternative. When you are buying a leather jacket there might be three or four jackets that you really like that are in the right price range and offer similar quality.

4. **Identify the consequences of each alternative and make a decision.**

   Is one jacket warmer than another? Will one last longer because it is better quality? Which of these factors is most important to you? The decision that you make should be the one that you'll be happy with later. Some things to consider when identifying the consequences of each alternative include:
   - Cost
   - Amount of time and energy required to implement
   - Effects on other people/community/society
   - Effects on the environment
   - Extent to which the solution is consistent with personal values, beliefs and goals

5. **Take action.**

   Draw up a plan of action based on your decision and proceed. In this situation, action means buying your first choice of jacket.

6. **Evaluate the results of your decision.**
Finally, think about the results of your decision. Did you get enough information? What would you do differently next time? Has the leather jacket been worth the money? Do you still think that your decision was the best one?

Now have students work individually. Ask each student to identify a planned decision that s/he made recently. Students should use the six steps of the decision-making process to write a description of how the decision was made.

Evaluation:

Examine students' descriptions of a recent decision. Do students understand the purpose and application of each of the six decision-making steps?

STUDENT HANDOUT:

THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

To accompany Activity #2, "The Decision-Making Process"

1. Identify the goal or define the problem.
2. Gather information about it.
3. Identify possible alternatives/solutions.
4. Identify the consequences of each alternative and make a decision.
5. Take action.
6. Evaluate the results of the decision.

ACTIVITY #3

EVERYDAY DECISIONS

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

1. Use the planned decision-making process to make a decision about a practical real-life situation.

Teacher Preparation:

Ensure that students have access to community resources. Duplicate a class set of the handout "Decision Needed". Make the Transparency "The Decision-Making Process".

Time:

Varies depending upon situation selected.

Procedure:

Review the six steps of the decision-making process with students using the Transparency. They are:

1. Identify the goal or define problem.
2. Gather information about it.
3. Identify possible solutions/alternatives.
4. Identify the consequences of each solution and make a decision.
5. Take action.
6. Evaluate the results of the decision.

Tell students that this activity will give them an opportunity to use the decision-making process in a realistic situation. A number of situations which require a decision are listed on the handout "Decision Needed". Tell students to work individually. Each student should select one situation which interests her/him and use the decision-making process to arrive at a decision that is right for her/him. Students will need to gather information from the community in order to make their decisions. For example, they will need to identify prices of various consumer goods and services, the kinds of goods and services available in their community, etc. They will also need to examine their personal values and goals in order to be sure that the decision they make is the right one for them.

Students should use the six steps of the decision-making process as headings in their notebooks and record the information they collect under the appropriate headings.

Evaluation:

Some of the situations are of a rather personal nature and students may wish to do a self-evaluation. When teacher evaluation is used, examine students' notebooks and identify whether students have used the steps of the planned decision-making process. Focus particularly on steps 2, 3 and 4 of the process. Do students realize that in any situation there is usually more than one option and that different choices have different long and short-term consequences?

Additional Activities:

1. Have students assume the role of a world leader who is currently in the news. Ask them to identify one decision which that leader must make. Decisions can relate to the economy, national defence, external relations or any other political matter. In their role of world leader, students should use the six step decision-making process to make this important decision. Have students watch the news to find out how their "pretend" decision compares to the decision that the leader actually made.
2. Ask students to identify a personal issue that they are struggling with. For example:
   • breaking up with their girlfriend or boyfriend;
   • getting along with a teacher or parent they find difficult.

Have students apply the decision-making steps to their situation. Are they happy with the results?

Be sure that information about students' personal concerns is treated with confidentiality.

STUDENT HANDOUT:

DECISION NEEDED

To accompany Activity #3, "Everyday Decisions"

A number of situations which require a decision are described below. Select one that interests you, gather information about prices, goods and services in your community and then use the decision-making process to make as realistic a decision as possible. Write down the information you gathered for each step of the decision-making process.

1. Where will I live after I complete high school? Some options include: university or technical school residence, with your parents, in an apartment with friends, in a mobile home on your parents' farm. Your decision will depend upon what you plan to do when you finish high school and also the area in which you plan to live.
2. Should I buy a car? If yes, what kind of car?
3. Should I go to university or technical school after high school? If yes, what school, what program?
4. Should I buy a VCR (or any other major purchase)? If yes, what kind should I buy?
5. Should I eat in restaurants? How often?
6. Should I spend the money that I've saved on a trip to Europe or a car, or should I use it to pay for my first year of technical school?
7. Should I get a part-time job? If yes, what kind?

TRANSPARENCY
THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS
To accompany Activity #3, "Everyday Decisions"

THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

1. Identify the goal or define the problem.
2. Gather information about it.
3. Identify possible alternatives/solutions.
4. Identify the consequences of each alternative and make a decision.
5. Take action.
6. Evaluate the results of the decision.

2. CHOICES AND CHALLENGES

For the Teacher

Individual values are a very important part of the decision-making process. They come into play at step 4 of the decision-making process, identify the consequences of each solution and make a decision. For example, two people might agree that building a manufacturing plant will create lots of jobs, but that it will pollute the air and water nearby. However, the people might have entirely different opinions about whether the plant should be built. A person who values the environment more than job creation would say no. A person who holds the opposite point of view will say yes.

Consumer values profoundly influence the marketplace. The fact that consumers value saving money and energy more than driving large luxurious cars has led to the development of many models of small, gas-efficient cars. Consumers' increasing concern about the environment has lead to the development and marketing of many "green" products.

Related Content

Module II, Your Economic Decisions; Chapter A, Focus on the Individual; Topic 2, Values and Goals.

ACTIVITY #1

YOUR VALUES INFLUENCE YOUR DECISION

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

1. Explain the crucial role that values play in the decision-making process.
2. Discuss how decisions made by individuals can affect the community as a whole.

Time:

One class period.

Procedure:

Ask the class to identify a number of consumer-oriented decisions that are of a potentially controversial nature. Some possibilities include:

- Should I recycle newspapers, cans and bottles?
- Should I use pesticides in the garden?
- Should I use disposable diapers?
- Should I buy products manufactured by a company that has substantial investment in South Africa?
- Should I buy products made by a company that employs handicapped people, even if these products cost more?
- Should I drive a car?

Write the suggestions on the board.

Divide the class into groups of three or four students. Assign one decision to each group. Have each group apply the first three steps of the decision-making process to its decision. These are; identify the problem, gather information about the problem and identify possible solutions. Write these steps on the board.

The next step in the decision-making process is to identify the consequences of possible solutions. One of the things to address during this step is whether the solution is consistent with personal beliefs and values.

At this point, tell students that each member of the group is to evaluate the various solutions from a different value perspective. For example, one person might evaluate the solutions from the point of view of a person for whom money is everything. Another person might evaluate them from the perspective of someone whose primary concern is the environment. A third person might assume the position of someone who is very concerned about people in third world countries. Each student should select the solution which appears best according to the value position assigned to her or him, and write a short paragraph explaining why (allow 15 minutes).

At the conclusion of the activity, discuss with the class why different people select different alternatives, even when they agree on the basic facts associated with the situation. Emphasize that individual values are a crucial aspect of decision-making.

Then ask students to write a paragraph describing how changing societal values toward issues such as the environment, auto safety, physical fitness and energy use have influenced consumer choice and the kinds of products and services that businesses make available to consumers. Have students submit their paragraphs.

Evaluation:

Consider the comments made by students in the discussion which concludes this activity and review students' paragraphs. Do students realize that people make different decisions in the same situation because their value systems differ? Do students understand that changing societal values influence the nature of the marketplace?

Additional Activities:

Another possibility for this exercise is the situation in which an individual wins a million dollars in a lottery. Students should work through the six step decision-making process to identify different ways in which the money might be used. At step 4, "identify the consequences of each solution", they might use role-plays to illustrate that individuals with various value systems would evaluate the possible solutions differently. Some of the value positions might include:

- The individual who places high value on personal financial security, now and in the future.
- The person who is extremely concerned about world hunger.
- The person to whom it is very important to have many expensive possessions.
- The person who has a keen sense of responsibility toward his/her parents and brothers and sisters.

CHOOSE TO CONSERVE

Introduction

The disasters at Bhopal, Love Canal, Chernobyl, St. Basile le Grand and Valdez shocked the world. Yet every day, the individual actions of citizens and businesses worldwide may contribute far more to the degradation of the natural environment than any of these events did.

It is easy to believe that global environmental problems are the fault of governments or multinational corporations. In truth, though, each of us has far more responsibility for and influence over these issues than we perceive. Our desire for a high standard of living, and the resulting consumer demand, causes environmental destruction. Each and every one of us, through our daily activities, gives a stamp of approval to products or procedures that degrade the environment. We are all responsible for the present-day situation, and it is up to all of us, collectively, to chart a way out.

All of our daily personal decisions affect the environment. Whenever we use water or energy unnecessarily or buy something that has a huge environmental cost, we are encouraging waste or misuse of the scarce resources of this planet. Each individual contribution to the problem may be minimal, but the combined activities of our neighbours, our community and citizens across the country have an enormous effect.

Very few of our environmental problems are directly caused by wilful neglect on the part of industry. The majority result from the unwitting actions and complacency of people just like you and me!

Purpose

The purpose of this chapter is to allow students to assess their personal level of awareness concerning the environment and its protection, and to provide them with information about how marketplace decisions can positively influence the environment.

Scope

This chapter has three topics. They are:

1. Becoming Aware
2. What You Can Do
3. Choices and Challenges

Introduction from: Griss, Paul (1990). *The daily planet: A hands-on guide to a greener environment*. Toronto: Key Porter Books. Used with permission.

1. BECOMING AWARE

For the Teacher

The environment belongs to all of us. Increasingly, people around the world are becoming aware of the negative impact human use and waste of the world's resources is having on our environment. Our fragile planet cannot continue to bear human neglect.

In the global village, potentially hazardous industrial and agricultural industries, processes and practices can have an international negative impact, as do the wasteful and unthinking attitudes and behaviour of individual consumers.

Since the environment belongs to and affects us all, it is the responsibility of all to respect it. Consumers can play an important role in conserving and protecting the environment by considering the effect their decisions and actions have on it.

While government and business face the enormous task of dealing with such problems as oil spills, transportation of toxic substances and disposal of nuclear waste, every world citizen has a responsibility to adopt practices that will assist in protecting our increasingly fragile world.

Students need to be aware of the consumer products and services that contribute to pollution and threaten the environment. They need to be encouraged to change their personal habits and lifestyle so that they protect the environment. They need information that will guide them in evaluating products reputed to be environment-friendly and should be encouraged to let businesses and manufacturers know of their preferences and concerns.

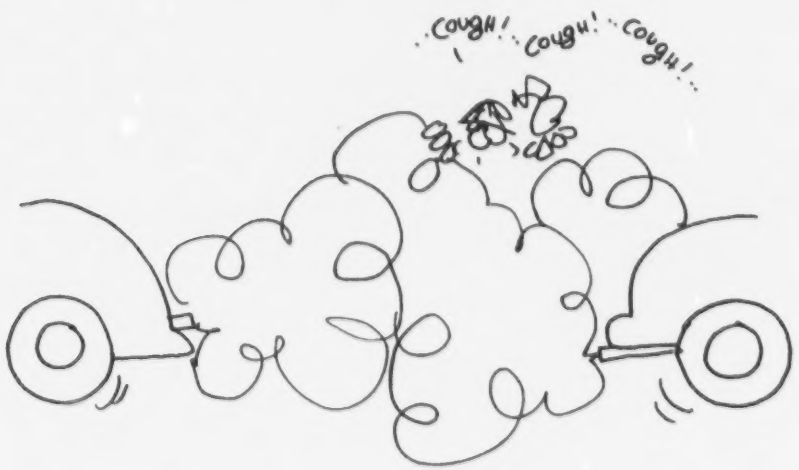
We no longer have the time to sit back and complacently allow current ecologically damaging practices to continue.

As we move into the 21st Century, a new era of social and consumer activism provides opportunities for increased consumer involvement. Young people need to be encouraged to be a part of this action.

Related Content

Module I, The Canadian Marketplace and You; Chapter A, The Canadian Marketplace; Topic 3, The Marketplace and the Environment.

Module V, Citizen Participation in Canada's Market-Based Society; Chapter A, Consumer Rights and Responsibilities; Topic 7, The Right to a Healthy Environment/The Responsibility to Protect and Respect the Environment.



ACTIVITY #1

CONSERVATION AND ME

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

1. Assess their own attitudes toward environmental protection and conservation.

Teacher Preparation:

Duplicate a class set of the handout "Conservation & Me".

Time:

One-fourth class period.

Procedure:

Tell students that this activity will give them an opportunity to examine their own attitudes toward conservation. Distribute the handout "Conservation & Me" and have students complete it individually.

Evaluation:

Student self-evaluation.

STUDENT HANDOUT:

CONSERVATION AND ME

To Accompany Activity #1, Conservation and Me

Test your attitudes about conservation. Read each statement. Circle the number that best describes how you feel about that statement. Circle only one number for each statement.

		Strongly Disagree	Mildly Disagree	No Opinion	Mildly Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	I am concerned that what I buy will last a long time and need few repairs.	1	3	4	5	7
2.	I like the taste of food that has been home grown better than food from a grocery store.	1	3	4	5	7
3.	More people should be involved in the protection of our environment.	1	3	4	5	7
4.	I am concerned about human rights in other nations.	1	3	4	5	7
5.	If I were to move, one important consideration would be the quality of the air in the new area.	1	3	4	5	7
6.	It is my responsibility to recycle used things.	1	3	4	5	7
7.	The more buttons (or speeds) a blender has, the better it is.	1	3	4	5	7
8.	If I had a choice, I would buy a new car rather than a used one.	1	3	4	5	7
9.	I would rather drive my own car than depend on others for a ride.	1	3	4	5	7
10.	Riding a bike or walking to school (work), rather than driving is a good idea.	1	3	4	5	7
11.	The more money I make this year, the happier I'll probably be.	1	3	4	5	7
12.	Growing my own vegetables would be too much work.	1	3	4	5	7
13.	If I had a choice, I would dry my clothes on a line rather than in a clothes dryer.	1	3	4	5	7
14.	I feel better about myself when I wear new clothes.	1	3	4	5	7
15.	I think collecting newspapers for recycling or reuse is a good idea.	1	3	4	5	7
16.	I am willing to be paid for something with exchange of services instead of money.	1	3	4	5	7
17.	To me, finding new uses for discarded things is not worth the trouble.	1	3	4	5	7
18.	On a cold day, I would rather put on a sweater than turn up the heat.	1	3	4	5	7
19.	I think it is important to drive within the speed limit to help conserve gasoline.	1	3	4	5	7
20.	Canning and preserving my own foods would take up too much of my time.	1	3	4	5	7

Source: J.C. Penney Forum, November 1983.

Scoring:

- Add together
  (a) your circled responses from items 1 through 6, 10, 13, 15, 16, 18, 19
- Add together
  (b) your circled responses from items 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 14, 17, 20
- Subtract the total of (b) from the total of (a). The remainder is your score.
  The higher the score, the greater your agreement with conservation attitudes.

ACTIVITY #2

WHERE DO YOU STAND?

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

1. Assess their own knowledge about environmental problems, the extent to which they are taking action to correct these problems, and their feelings about the problems.

Teacher Preparation:

Duplicate a class set of the handout, "Where Do You Stand?"

Time:

One class period.

Procedure:

Explain to students that this activity is designed to give them an opportunity to assess their level of awareness concerning environmental problems and to think about what they personally can do to solve the problem. Distribute the handout "Where Do You Stand?" and ask students to work alone or in pairs to complete the activity.

1. What do you KNOW about the environmental problems that threaten the planet?
   - List, in order of importance, what you consider to be the greatest threats to our future safety and security.
   - Choosing three of these problems, write a paragraph on each, explaining what you believe to be an underlying cause of the problem, how it affects the environment and what can or is being done to address the problem.
2. What are you DOING to protect our environment?
   - List activities that you are doing to protect the environment.
   - In what way(s) do you feel these activities are helping?
   - List activities that you are doing which are harmful to the environment.
   - Why have you made no effort to eliminate these activities?
3. How do you FEEL about environmental protection?
   - Write a paragraph explaining what you feel is the role of government, industry and business, communities and individual citizen-consumers in environmental protection.
   - How would you rate the seriousness of the problem for present and future earth citizens?

Evaluation:

Student self-evaluation.

Additional Activities:

Some students may discover that they know little about the causes of environmental problems. Those students may want to research a particular environmental problem and write a report on it. In their reports students might include:

- definition of the problem
- basic reasons for the problem
- their opinion about the seriousness of the present situation
- future predictions
- suggestions for reducing the problem
- descriptions of current and proposed actions by government, industry and business
- lists of major consumer groups addressing the problem
- lists of action groups working within your community
- descriptions of actions which can be taken by individual citizen-consumers

STUDENT HANDOUT:

WHERE DO YOU STAND?

To accompany Activity #2, "Where Do You Stand?"

1. What do you KNOW about the environmental problems that threaten the planet?
   - List, in order of importance, what you consider to be the greatest threats to our future safety and security.
   - Choose three of these problems, write a paragraph on each, explaining what you believe to be an underlying cause of the problem, how it affects the environment and what can or is being done to address the problem.
2. What are you DOING to protect our environment?
   - List activities that you are doing to protect the environment.
   - In what way(s) do you feel these activities are helping?
   - List activities that you are doing which are harmful to the environment.
   - Why have you made no effort to eliminate these activities?
3. How do you FEEL about environmental protection?
   - Write a paragraph explaining what you feel is the role of government, industry and business, communities and individual citizen-consumers in environmental protection.
   - How would you rate the seriousness of the problem for present and future earth citizens.

2. WHAT YOU CAN DO

For the Teacher

Our planet is in trouble. Almost every day we hear of another environmental disaster happening in our own backyard. Air and water are becoming contaminated, our landscape is becoming blighted with unsightly landfill sites, and oil spills are becoming commonplace. Poisoned air, filthy rivers and oceans, acid rain, holes in the ozone layer and the greenhouse effect have all become issues of concern for the environment. Because these problems are monumental in size, individuals often feel overwhelmed and think that there is little that they can do to help. However, by cutting down on waste, conserving energy and changing shopping habits, each person can contribute in his or her own way to helping our planet become a cleaner, safer and healthier place to live.

How do we clean up the environment? Where do we start? One place to start is with the **four R's of waste management: reduce, reuse, recycle** and **recover.**

Reduce the amount of waste produced by avoiding products that are designed to be thrown away or have excessive packaging.

Reuse products more than once. Saving and reusing plastic shopping bags for example, or refilling pop and beer bottles.

Recycle paper, glass, metal, and plastic soft drink bottles. It takes less energy to produce goods from recycled materials than from raw sources.

Recover resources whenever possible. For example, develop a compost from grass clippings and kitchen leftovers which can be used to fertilize the garden. Waste incinerators generate steam or electricity which can be used for other purposes.

Related Content

Module I, The Canadian Marketplace and You; Chapter A, The Canadian Marketplace; Topic 3, The Marketplace and the Environment.

Module V, Citizen Participation in Canada's Market-Based Society; Chapter A, Consumer Rights and Responsibilities; Topic 7, The Right to a Healthy Environment/The Responsibility to Protect and Respect the Environment.

ACTIVITY #1

WHAT YOU BUY CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

1. Identify buying decisions which can be made by ordinary consumers in order to help protect the environment.

Teacher Preparation:

Collect a number of news clippings, books, pamphlets, etc. which deal with environmental problems and concerns, or have students collect them in advance.

Time:

One class period.

Procedure:

Discuss with students the part that each of us can play in resolving the environmental crisis. Divide students into groups of three or four. Have each group develop a list of purchasing decisions that ordinary consumers can make during their regular shopping in order to protect the environment. Some possibilities include:

- refusing to buy products that have excessive packaging;
- buying products in recyclable glass rather than plastic;
- buying eggs in cardboard, not styrofoam containers;
- choosing natural laundry soap and cleaning compounds or making their own;
- asking the grocer to stock safe, non-toxic cleaning alternatives;
- avoiding single-serving containers that can't be recycled, such as drinking boxes;
- looking for biodegradable products.

Students may want to refer to pamphlets, clippings and other sources of information while they are compiling their lists of purchasing decisions. At the conclusion of the activity, a class list which combines all of the lists developed by the students can be prepared, if time permits.

Evaluation:

Examine the lists prepared by students to assess whether the objective has been achieved.

Additional Activities:

1. Students can use their completed checklists to survey their home or school. How many harmful products do they find in their home or school? How many does their home or school avoid?

2. Have students survey their local grocery store using the list prepared in class as a guide. Students should suggest changes in the products being stocked in order to make the items sold by the store more environmentally-friendly.

3. Have students check local fast-food restaurants. They should note the number and kinds of products available in individual packages, such as sugar, ketchup, mustard, etc. Note use of plastic or foam cups, plates, trays, etc.

   Have students develop an action plan for dealing with surplus of packaging provided by many restaurants. Students might bring a china plate with them to a fast-food restaurant and ask that their food be placed on the plate to reduce the use of styrofoam, or they might ask that their food be placed directly on the plastic serving tray.

ACTIVITY #2

SPEAKING UP FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

1. Identify a message they want to deliver about the environment, a target audience and an appropriate means of delivering the message.
2. Develop and deliver a message about the environment.

Time:

One or two class period.

Procedure:

Explain to students that when you act in ways that respect the environment you are giving a powerful message to other people. Through your actions you are telling others that you value the environment and want to treat it with care. You can give people this message with words and images too. Speeches, articles, photographs and videotapes can all be used to speak up for the environment, to encourage other people to respect it and to give other people practical advice on caring for it.

Tell students that this activity will give them an opportunity to experiment with different ways of speaking up for the environment. Divide the class into groups of three to five. Each group should identify:

- the message they want to give about the environment. Encourage students to define their message quite narrowly. "We want to show people practical ways of reducing the amount of packaging materials they "use" is a manageable message, but "We want to encourage people to save the world for future generations" is not.
- the audience to which their message is directed. It is directed to their fellow students, to little kids, to grocery packagers, to all consumers?
- the most effective way of delivering their message to their target audience. Songs, plays, newspaper or magazine articles, letters to the editor, videotaped commercials are all possibilities.

Once students have completed these preliminary steps have them develop and deliver their message, using the technique they identified as being most effective.

Evaluation:

To assess whether Objective #1 has been achieved consider students' preliminary planning. Did they identify a limited, manageable message, a target audience and a method of delivery suitable for both message and audience? Encourage students to use self-evaluation to assess whether Objective #2 has been achieved. They might want to consider whether their message had a professional appearance and how the target audience reacted.

Additional Activities:

1. The entire class might select one target group, for example, the general public and one method of delivering their message, for example, a display at a mall. Students can then make displays, create audio and video recordings, and develop songs and skits that are appropriate for use in this situation.

ACTIVITY #3

IS IT REALLY "GREEN"?

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

1. Compare "green" products and services to conventional products and services.
2. Evaluate the validity of the advertising claims of three to five "green" products. Are they truly environmentally-friendly or are these claims advertising gimmicks?

Teacher Preparation:

Ensure that students have access to community resources.

Time:

10 to 15 minutes for introduction. One hour out-of-class time for research. One class period for compilation of results.

Procedure:

Remind students that many companies are now producing "green" products - items which are promoted as being non-harmful to the environment, both when produced and used. Ask students what this term means.

Tell students that in this activity they will have an opportunity to find out how environmentally-friendly some of these "green" products really are. Students can work alone or in pairs. Each pair (or individual) should identify three to five "green" products or services that interest them. The products can be cosmetics, cleaning products, diapers or diaper services, recycling services of various types, etc.

Students should read the label on the product, examine any advertising or promotional material that accompanies it, and compare it to conventional products. Why do its manufacturers consider it a "green" product? Does it differ significantly from other products of the same type? How does the product live up to its claims or is the supplier just using the word "green" to promote the product? Some students might want to research their products further by reading consumer magazines. In the case of services such as diaper services they may want to interview the person who owns the service.

After students have completed their research have them work in groups of four or five. The students should compare their findings. Then have each group prepare a chart listing the products or services they investigated, how they are different from conventional products, and whether they are truly "green" or whether this is merely an advertising gimmick. Recommended products can be starred or marked in some way.

Evaluation:

Examine students' completed charts to assess whether the objectives have been achieved.

Additional Activities:

1. After their research has been completed, students can prepare a booklet of recommended products and services. Only those items that are truly environmentally-friendly should be included. This booklet could be distributed to other teachers and students as well as parents.
2. Have students conduct an environmental scavenger hunt. Divide students into groups and give each group a list of things to find and bring to class. Possibilities include:
   - the address of a family that has a compost heap
   - the address of an energy efficient home
   - an example of junk mail
   - an object that can be recycled
   - an object made from recycled material

ACTIVITY #4

GETTING RID OF THE GARBAGE

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

1. Identify at least one way in which common pieces of trash can be recycled, reused, reduced or recovered.

Teacher Preparation:

Duplicate a class set of the handouts "Down in the Dumps" and "15 Tips for Reducing Garbage". Using the master provided, make Transparency #11, "Four R's of Waste Management".

Time:

One class period.

Procedure:

Explain to students that the huge quantities of garbage produced by our society is a significant environmental problem. Much of this garbage goes into landfill sites where it stays forever without decaying. Distribute the handout "Down in the Dumps", which provides information about trash and landfill sites.

Introduce students to the concepts of recycle, reduce, reuse and recover, explaining that these are ways to reduce the amount of garbage produced. Give examples of each. Use Transparency #11.

Next, with the class, develop a list on the board of 10 or 12 items which commonly appear in household or school garbage. The list can include newspaper, writing or computer paper, plastic yogurt tubs and other containers, milk cartons, plastic lunch wrappers, etc.

Then divide the students into groups of three or four. Have each group identify at least one way that each item of garbage listed on the board can be recycled, reduced, reused or recovered. Some ideas to get students started appear on the handout "15 Tips for Reducing Garbage".

Evaluation:

Have students identify at least one way in which each of the items of garbage listed on the board can be recycled, reduced, reused or recovered?

Additional Activities:

1. Encourage students to take a leadership role in establishing a school garbage reduction program. Students should provide guidelines for other students and staff, and encourage school administration to buy and use school supplies in ways which reduce garbage.
2. Have students investigate how garbage is handled in their communities. It is trucked to a landfill site or burned? In rural communities, how do the farmers dispose of their household and farm garbage?
3. Have students investigate the recycling programs in their community. (Note: these vary tremendously from province to province and community to community.) They should list all of the programs available and describe their purpose and include addresses and phone numbers for more information.
4. Have students investigate how hazardous wastes are disposed of in their community. They should find out:
   - what kind of garbage has been termed hazardous?
   - what the results are of disposing of hazardous products in regular garbage or pouring them down the drain?
   - how their community disposes of such waste - is there a hazardous waste depot?

STUDENT HANDOUT:
DOWN IN THE DUMPS

To Accompany Activity #4, "Getting Rid of the Garbage"

HOW LANDFILL SITES STACK UP

The following information was collected by a group of archaeologists at the University of Arizona. Called "The Garbage Project" these "garbologists" have dug thirty metres into landfill sites and dumps in four states. Their findings:

- fast food packaging makes up less than 1% of the total
- disposable diapers make up less than 1% of the total
- plastics occupy 9% of the total (unchanged from 20 years ago. Explanation: plastics are constantly being made smaller and lighter, therefore crush easier.)
- paper accounts for approximately 50%
- organic materials - food and yard waste (grass clippings, leaves, timber, etc.) make up about 12%

Points to note:

- even after 25 years, one quarter to one half of food waste in landfills remains recognizable; intact hot dogs and steaks with meat and fat on the bone were still visible
- newspapers and packaging material seemed impervious to biodegradation; newspapers from the 1960's were found in almost new condition

The garbologists' conclusion: rather than resembling a giant compost, the landfill sites, upon deeper examination, revealed a mummification process in progress.

How Canadian garbage compares:

Paper	36%
Food wastes and other decayables	28%
Glass	7%
Metals	7%
Yard wastes	6%
Plastics	5%
Textiles	4%
Wood	4%
Other	3%

Note:
More than 60% of the garbage is composed of paper and food wastes from residential and industrial sources. Canada has the dubious distinction of making more waste per capita than any other country in the world.

Garbage Trivia

- The Fresh Kills landfill, on Staten Island, is the place where New York City's garbage is dumped. It stands 152 metres high and covers 1215 hectares. When finished, it will be the largest human-made object on earth, bigger than the Great Wall of China.
- The Greater Vancouver Regional District produces enough garbage in one year, one million tonnes, to fill Vancouver's B.C. Place dome.
- The largest paper recycling plant is in Korea. It recycles 1,000 tonnes of paper a day.
- Recycling is not new. "In the early 1900's they called it junk. In the 1950's it became scrap. Now it's recyclables", says Rod Lotzkar, whose family has been in the recycling business in Vancouver since 1912.
- The average child soils close to half a tonne of disposable diapers by age two and a half.
- At Emily Carr College of Art and Design, students consider garbage a creative medium. One assignment was making three-dimensional chairs from unconventional materials found in garbage dumps.
- An aggressive "Don't Mess With Texas" anti-litter campaign reduced litter in that state by 60% in three years.
- Packaging material has increased in volume by 33% since 1970, and new paper materials such as computer paper, paper plates and junk mail have doubled in volume over the same time period.
- The average Canadian household throws away one tonne of garbage every year.

Figures for Canadian garbage based on a 1987 landfill study by the Environment Council of Alberta.

STUDENT HANDOUT:

TWELVE TIPS FOR REDUCING GARBAGE

To Accompany Activity #4, "Getting Rid of the Garbage"

Kick the Disposable Habit!

1. Many "disposables" are actually "indisposable": plastic packaging (including diapers) will last as long as the pyramids. Shop with the environment in mind. Resist excessive convenience packaging. Less garbage in, less garbage out!

Use Things Up!

2. Keep a stack of one-side-clear paper for: note pads, scratch paper, rough drafts, doodling ...

3. Share leftovers: with a daycare centre (paint, cloth remnants, yarn, baby food jars, egg cartons ...), with a laundromat, doctor's office, or seniors' home (magazines, books you've finished ...)

Get Organized for Recycling!

4. Set up recycling centres at home, at work, at school: recycle whatever you can find a depot for: paper (all kinds), glass, metals, plastics, textiles, motor oil, appliances, computer supplies ...

Take Care of Toxics!

5. Hang on to dry cell batteries: the billions of batteries we throw away each year contain deadly mercury, nickel, cadmium, and silver.

6. Be aware of other toxics we take for granted: paints and solvents, WD-40 (ozone destroying), oven cleaners, drain openers, pesticides, chlorine laundry bleach ... KEEP THEM OUT OF THE GARBAGE!

Request Recycled!

7. Encourage recycling by creating a demand for recycled and environmentally friendly products: unbleached and recycled products, refillable glass bottles instead of one-way glass or aluminum, minimal packaging, non-toxic antifreeze, recycled motor oil, rechargeable batteries, cloth diapers ...

Carry-Alongs Instead of Carry-Outs!

8. Pack a portable mug or drink glass, so you can decline styrofoam or paper throwaways. Pack a sack, a bag or a basket so you don't have to choose between "plastic or paper" at the grocery store.

Consider Composting!

9. A third of the garbage we throw away is food and yard waste. "Waste" is the word! It's easy to use these organics to build topsoil for your yard. If you don't have a yard, lobby your city for community composting programs to create topsoil for public parks!

Be a Good Citizen!

10. Encourage your city officials to set up recycling programs, community compost programs, hazardous waste collection and decontamination programs ...

11. Encourage manufacturers and retailers to supply consumer products that are environment-friendly.

12. Encourage decisionmakers at your workplace or school to implement recycling and waste reduction plans and environmentally friendly purchasing policies.

From: Society Promoting Environmental Conservation, Vancouver, B.C. Used with permission.

TRANSPARENCY
FOUR R'S OF WASTE MANAGEMENT

To accompany Activity #4, "Getting Rid of the Garbage"

FOUR R's OF WASTE MANAGEMENT

- Reduce
- Reuse
- Recycle
- Recover

3. CHOICES AND CHALLENGES

For the Teacher

Changing your own purchasing habits and consumption patterns is an important step towards cleaning up the environment and creating a cleaner world for the next generation.

Another step which you can take is to provide others with information about the state of the environment and the ways in which consumer practices can contribute to either the health of the environment or to it's continued destruction.

Related Content

Module I, The Canadian Marketplace and You; Chapter A, The Canadian Marketplace; Topic 3, the Marketplace and the Environment.

Module V, Citizen Participation in Canada's Market-Based Society; Chapter A, Consumer Rights and Responsibilities; Topic 7, the Right to a Healthy Environment/The Responsibility to Protect and Respect the Environment.

ACTIVITY #1

SHARING THE NEWS

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

1. Provide information about the role consumers can play to protect the environment to other people.

Time:

Varies depending on activity selected.

Procedure:

Have students distribute the information they compiled in this unit to classmates, the school community and/or the general public by:

- developing and conducting a seminar, workshop or conference with class members serving as resource people.
- holding an "environmental" day with displays and information tables. The day can be held in the school or at a local mall.
- writing, printing and distributing information bulletins or fact sheets on the consumer and the environment.
- holding an entertainment night which features funny and serious skits and songs about consumers and the environment.
- creating posters for display in the school and the community.
- developing and delivering a daily "consumer and the environment" message of the school's public address system.

Evaluation:

Have students develop an evaluation form which the individuals who are exposed to their display, bulletin, entertainment night, etc. can use to evaluate their work.

Adapted from: *The English times*, Winter 1990, Saskatchewan Consumer and Commercial Affairs. Used with permission.

APPENDIX

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix #1 – Organizations

Government Departments of Consumer Affairs

Consumers' Association of Canada

Environmental Associations

Other Organizations

Appendix #2 – Working in Small Groups

Tips for Using Small Groups

Kinds of Small Groups

The Teacher's Role in Small Groups

The Student's Role in Small Groups

Characteristics of Effective Group Members

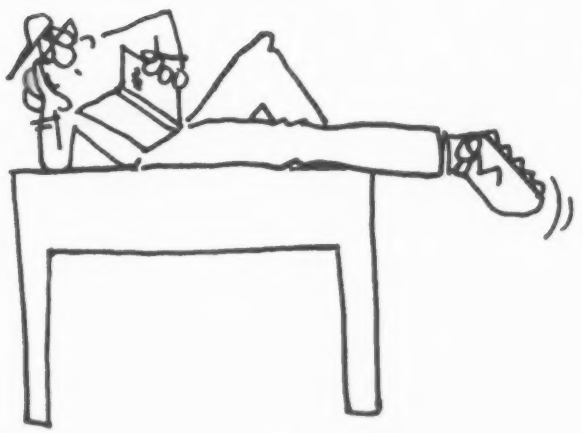
The Duties of the Group Leader

The Duties of the Participants

Advantages of Using Small Groups

Limitations of Using Small Groups

Assessing Small Group Effectiveness



APPENDIX #1 - ORGANIZATIONS

Government Department of Consumer Affairs
Contact these agencies for information about consumer legislation. Some also provide educational services and information on specific products.

Consumer and Corporate Affairs Canada
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0C9
(819) 997-2938

Ontario Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations
555 Yonge Street
Toronto, Ontario
M7A 2H6

Alberta Consumer and Corporate Affairs
10065 Jasper Avenue, Capital Square,
7th Floor
Edmonton, Alberta
T5J 3B1
(403) 427-2201

British Columbia Ministry of Consumer and Corporate Affairs
940 Blanshard Street
Victoria, British Columbia
V8W 3E6
(604) 387-6831

Manitoba Consumers' Bureau

114 Garry Street
Winnipeg, Manitoba
R3C 1G1

(204) 956-2040
(in Winnipeg)
1-800-782-0067
(in Manitoba)

New Brunswick Consumer and Corporate Affairs Branch
Department of Justice
Box 6000
Fredericton, New Brunswick
E3B 5H1
(506) 453-2659

Newfoundland Consumer Affairs Division
Department of Justice
Elizabeth Towers, Box 999
St. John's Newfoundland
A1C 5T7
(709) 737-2600

Northwest Territories Consumer Services
Department of Justice and Public Services
Government of the Northwest Territories
Yellowknife, Northwest Territories
X1A 2L9
(403) 873-7125

Nova Scotia Department of Consumer Affairs
Consumer Services Division
5151 Terminal Road, Box 998
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 2X3
(902) 424-4690

Quebec Office de la Protection du Consommateur
6, rue de l'Université
Rez-de-Chaussée
Quebec, Quebec
G1B 5J8
(418) 643-1557

Saskatchewan Family Foundation
Consumer Education and Marketplace Relations Branch
1871 Smith Street
Regina, Saskatchewan
S4P 3V7
(306) 787-3938

Yukon Territory Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs
Government of the Yukon Territory
Box 2703
Whitehorse, Yukon Territory
Y1A 2C6
(403) 667-5312

Consumers' Association of Canada
The Consumers' Association of Canada is an advocacy group for consumers. It speaks out on issues of importance to consumers. As well, it tests specific products and services and makes the results of its test available to consumers.

Consumers' Association of Canada
National Office
Box 9300
Ottawa, Ontario
K1G 3T9

Alberta Office:
304 - 10136 - 100 St.
Edmonton, Alberta
T5J 0P1

British Columbia Office:
103 - 163 West Hastings
Vancouver, British Columbia
V6B 1H5

Manitoba Office:
21 - 222 Osborne St. S.
Winnipeg, Manitoba
R3L 1Z3

Westman Office:
935 - 26th Street
Brandon, Manitoba
R7B 2B7

Newfoundland Office:
92 Old Topsail Rd.
St. Johns Newfoundland
A1E 2A8

Northwest Territories Office:
Box 995
Yellowknife, Northwest Territories
X1A 2N7

Nova Scotia Office:
Box 1867
Stellarton, Nova Scotia
B0K 1S0

Ontario Office:
403 - 234 Eglinton Ave. E.
Toronto, Ontario
M4P 1K5

Quebec Office:
4823 Sherbrooke St. W.
Montreal, Quebec
H3Z 1G7

Saskatchewan Office:
136 Ave. F South
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
S7M 1S8

Environmental Associations
A few national environmental associations are listed below. Check the local phone book or with your public library for information about environmental associations in your area.

Canadian Environmental Network (CEN)
P.O. Box 1289, Station B
Ottawa, Ontario
K1P 5R3

Canadian Nature Federation
453 Sussex Drive
Ottawa, Ontario
K1N 6Z4

Canadian Wildlife Federation
1673 Carling Avenue
Ottawa, Ontario
K2A 3Z1

Directory of Canadian Women Specializing in Global Issues
c/o Canadian Council for International Co-operation
1 Nicholas Street, Suite 300
Ottawa, Ontario
K1N 7B7

Environment Canada
Environment Protection Service
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 1C8

Friends of the Earth
251 Laurier Avenue West
Suite 701
Ottawa, Ontario
K1P 5J6

Greenpeace
Ontario Branch Office
580 Bloor Street West
Toronto, Ontario
M6G 1K1

Pollution Probe
12 Madison Avenue
Toronto, Ontario
M5R 2S1

Solar Energy Society of Canada
11 York Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1N 5S7

World Wildlife Fund Canada
60 St. Clair Avenue East
Suite 201
Toronto, Ontario
M5T 1N5

Other Organizations

The agencies listed below are mentioned in the body of **Project Real World** and users are referred to the appendix for full addresses.

Canadian Standards Association
178 Rexdale Boulevard
Toronto, Ontario
M9W 1R3

Canadian Radio, TV and
Telecommunication Commission (CRTC)
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0N2

Health Protection Branch
Health and Welfare Canada
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0L2

Direct Sellers Association
4950 Yonge Street, Suite 1400
North York, Ontario
M2N 6K1

APPENDIX #2 - WORKING IN SMALL GROUPS

Small group learning units are a good way to increase teacher and student communication.

Small groups increase flexibility and help students adopt more independent and responsible learning methods and become more self-disciplined (Stanford 1977).

With small groups, students can become active participants in the classroom, and more motivated to achieve.

The purpose of small group learning is to share information, solve problems, make decisions or help each other learn content or process.

Tips for using small groups:

1. Use groups of 4 to 8 students.
2. Provide space with proper furniture and good acoustics.
3. Make sure that group leaders fully understand their role.
4. Make sure that group members fully understand their role.
5. If necessary, give students background information on the topic being discussed.
6. The topic should stimulate thinking and help students realize that any number of "correct answers", and a variety of legitimate viewpoints can exist.
7. Give students clear objectives. What is the purpose? (You may wish to have students define the objectives.)
8. The classroom climate should be friendly and nonthreatening. Group members need acceptance, trust and security so that they can contribute freely, without teacher or other pressure or censure.

Kinds of Small Groups

Depending on what you want to do - what your topic or task is for the students - there are different types of small groups you can use:

1. **Discussion Group**
   - A discussion group encourages students to become involved with their peers. It recognizes the importance of being able to work with others.
   - The teacher must provide students with sufficient background information for the discussion of a clear understanding of the objectives.
   - This is a good way to handle classroom, community or national issues.
2. **Brainstorming Group**
   - Brainstorming is a fun way to encourage creative thinking and problem-solving.
   - It stimulates individual student's participation and is nonthreatening so can draw out shy students.
   - Students, in a set time, are asked to come up with as many ideas or suggestions on a topic as they can.
   - Quantity of ideas is desired, freewheeling is effective and hitchhiking on their group or individual ideas is permitted.
   - Judgement is deferred until the end and criticism is not allowed.
   - This is a good way to introduce students to other small group work.

3. **Buzz Group**
   - Small clusters (4 to 7 students) are grouped for a short time (5 to 10 minutes) to seek the solution to an issue or problem.
   - A recorder and leader are chosen quickly in each group.
   - Alternatives to the issue are sought. The pros and cons of these are considered, agreement is sought and a solution is proposed.
   - Teachers can use Buzz groups on many occasions in the classroom. For example, when an issue is raised during a lesson, you can announce a buzz group session to explore it.

4. **Think-Pair-Share Group** (Lyman, 1985)
   - This method extends students' thinking and interaction.
   - The teacher begins with a short presentation on the topic. To encourage students to consider more fully what was explained, the teacher poses one question and asks students to spend a minute or two thinking alone about the issue.
   - Students are then assigned to pairs to share what they were thinking. One student makes a statement and the other must paraphrase it until the position of the student who made the statement is understood. This is followed by a reversal of the statement-maker and paraphraser roles.
   - Students (pairs) then report back to the whole group or other pairs.

5. **Problem Solving Group**
   - Group members, in a systematic way, seek the solution to a problem.
   - Problem-solving groups are based on the "Scientific Method."

   The steps are:
   - **problem definition,**
   - **brainstorm the likely causes of the problem,**
   - **decide the most likely cause,**
   - **brainstorm potential solutions,**
   - **select the most likely solution** (based on determination of pros and cons of alternatives), and
   - **decide when and how to implement the solution.**

6. **Tutorial Group**
   - Tutorial groups are set up to help students who need help or additional practice or for students who can benefit from enrichment.
   - A tutorial group is led by the teacher or by a student.
   - Greater attention to individual needs is possible and students can participate more actively when tutorial groups are used.

7. **Laboratory Group/Investigative Group**
   - A laboratory group is formed to complete a project, do an experiment, or practice something that has been presented by you.
   - A common example is a chemistry laboratory group.

8. **Role-Playing Group**
   - In a role-playing group, each group member is assigned a role to assume on a controversial topic.
   - Students may or may not agree with the stance they have been given to present or defend.
   - A role-playing group can bring out all sides of an issue or help students learn to understand the ideas or feelings of others.

9. **One-Three-Six Group**
   - The one-three-six group method can be used at almost any time during a lesson.
   - Students are asked, as individuals, to record their opinion on an issue. Then each student is asked to join two other students (form groups of three) and come to an agreement.
   - Two groups of three join and seek consensus.

10. Panel, Symposium, Forum, Dialogue and Round Table

- Rather than the teacher presenting information and ideas through lectures, assigned questions or readings, students can play an active part in their learning.
- This can be done by setting up a:
  - **panel** (a group of students discuss a topic before a class - chaired by either the teacher or a student),
  - **committee** (a group of students learn about a topic and report),
  - **symposium** (several students become "experts" in a topic and give brief presentations to the class),
  - **forum** (a class discussion in which a problem is explored through questions and answers and short statements under the guidance of a chairperson),
  - **dialogue** (two people discuss a topic in front of the class),
  - **round table** (a group of students discuss an issue in front of a class).
- Students find these methods motivating. The teacher can provide a summary to ensure that content is organized, correctly understood and that it links to what is being studied.

11. Value-Clarifying Group

- Groups are presented with a value-laden topic.
- Each group is asked to find a number of solutions, discuss the pros and cons of these alternatives and decide.
- The idea is for students to clarify their values and learn to understand and tolerate the values of others.
- Value-clarifying groups should be used with care.
- This is a controversial method. Some educators believe it to be motivating and invaluable for developing critical thinking skills; others believe the approach to be superficial and laden with inadequacies and problems.

The Teacher's Role in Small Groups

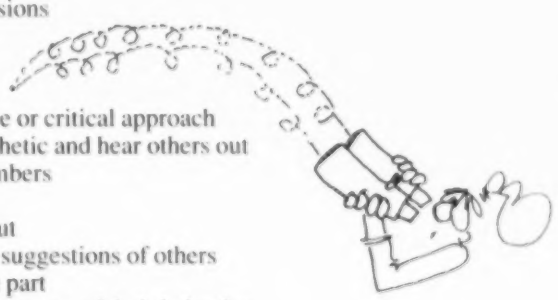
- Communicate objectives, select the topic or assignment and ensure the task is understood.
- Decide the size of the group.
- Assign the students to groups.
- See that the room is arranged to accommodate group work.
- Provide appropriate materials.
- Set the period for completion of the task.
- Inform the group of the behavior expected and teach interpersonal and group skills.
- Act as a resource person and monitor.
- Intervene as necessary to solve problems or to teach group skills.
- See that group effectiveness is monitored.
- Evaluate the product of the group and the individuals in it.
- Encourage a classroom climate that is nonthreatening and friendly.

The Students' Role in Small Groups (Stanford and Rourke, 1974)

- **Initiator** - gets discussion underway, helps the group organize, and keeps it moving toward the goal.
- **Contributor** - offers opinions, facts, anecdotes, or examples that could help the group solve the problem.
- **Clarifier** - helps make sure that the terms, the problem and contributions by group members are understood by all. If needed, the clarifier suggests that added information be sought.
- **Summarizer** - helps keep discussion relevant and to the point by bringing together and summarizing what has been discussed or learned to date. The summarizer also makes sure that everybody in the group understands where the group stands on an issue.
- **Evaluator** - keeps track of how well the group is progressing in its task and tactfully points out problems the group is having in working together.
- **Recorder** - records the main points of the discussion and a summary of the group's discussion. On occasion what was recorded is read back to help the group recall what was covered during discussion or to make sure that it is accurate.
- **Encourager** - facilitates participation by listening carefully, being friendly, complimenting members for their contributions and inviting participation.
- **Harmonizer** - is the peace-keeper, the "one who throws oil on troubled waters" by relieving tension (perhaps through humour), settling disputes, helping the group work out disagreements and suggesting compromises.

Characteristics of Effective Group Members.

Teach members to:



- be on time and attend all group sessions
- take an active part and contribute information and ideas
- contribute to group maintenance
- have a positive, rather than negative or critical approach
- listen when others speak, be empathetic and hear others out
- respect and interact with other members
- respect individual differences
- avoid prejudices and keep biases out
- seek, and be open to, the ideas and suggestions of others
- encourage non-contributors to take part
- accept responsibility for the consequences of their behavior
- be sensitive to the feelings and concerns of others
- avoid self-serving, judgemental, blaming, grandstanding or storytelling behavior
- be genuine and open
- support others and help them articulate their ideas
- help the group by summarizing, clarifying, mediating, praising and encouraging
- use problem-solving, decision-making, and conflict resolution frames of reference
- act as group leader, recorder, or group effectiveness monitor as appropriate

The duties of the group leader are to:

- see that the "problem" is clarified
- get discussion started
- keep discussion moving
- see that all phases of the problem are brought out
- keep discussion on topic
- encourage full participation and draw out "non-talkers"
- be objective
- rephrase, clarify statements or have others do this
- see that summaries or conclusions are made
- see that all members are treated with respect
- respect the confidence of the group
- report, or see that the thoughts of the group are fairly reported

The duties of participants are to:

- contribute a reasonable quantity of ideas and experiences
- keep prejudices out (at the very least, recognize them as such)
- keep on topic
- avoid "story-telling" and engaging in long, drawn-out arguments
- avoid making speeches to show off
- help phrase ideas and statements
- show respect for the ideas and opinions of others
- confine the argument to ideas and not engage in personal attacks
- help make summaries and reach a conclusion
- act as recorder or discussion evaluator as assigned.

Advantages of Using Small Groups

1. **Increased resources.** "Two heads are better than one." A group has access to more information and has a broader background than does any individual. More insights are likely to occur. A group can create more ideas.

2. **Members are often stimulated by others.** Members may be motivated to help the group succeed for social approval reasons. "Ideas beget ideas." "Hitchhiking" occurs (i.e., what one person thinks of or says may prompt an idea in another person, or suggestion by one person may be improved or extended by another).

3. **Better decisions can result.** Groups can produce better decisions than students working separately. Ideas can be clarified, refined, combined and evaluated through the interaction of group members; therefore, decisions should be superior.

4. **Group members may have a stronger commitment.** If group members help hammer something out, they tend to feel a stronger commitment to accept the result and follow through.

5. **Students are more actively involved.** Participation is more likely to be active rather than passive. This increases motivation, participation, learning, retention and commitment.

6. **Personal and social learnings take place.** Increased understanding of self, others and group processes can result. Interpersonal and social skills can be improved and an increased self-concept can result. Prejudices can be reduced. Students gain insights into the attitudes, reactions and sensitivities of others and may examine and modify their behavior. Ability to contribute rationally and constructively can be improved.

7. **Peer teaching is advantageous.** Studies confirm that peer teaching is powerful. Some things are learned better and faster when taught by peers. Ideas are put in "student language" rather than "teacher language," examples and explanations used by peers are often more relevant to students than teacher or text examples.

8. **Learning may be deepened.** Often material is easily forgotten since it often is just memorized and not really understood when direct teaching methods are used. When small groups are used it is more likely that students will understand the thinking skills or processes involved. When this occurs, learnings are more likely to be transferred to new situations.

Limitations of Using Small Groups

1. **Group decision-making takes time.** More time is required for decision-making or planning when it is done by a group than when it is done by an individual. The views of all must be heard and disagreements may occur that take time to resolve. No doubt, more material can be covered through methods such as lectures.
2. **Time may be seen to be wasted.** Discussions, if not well conducted, not only take time, they can waste it. Without able guidance or the use of group skills, discussion can wander, be misled, hindered, concerned with trivia, or lack of conclusiveness.
3. **Convictions may be suppressed.** Some members may conform just to avoid confrontation or risk censure. Less aggressive students may not be given a chance to present their ideas.
4. **Some tasks are better done by individuals.** Routine or simple tasks, or information acquisition may be better done by individuals.
5. **Talk may be substituted for action.** "Visiting" may take precedence over productivity. In some situations, groups may tend to be indecisive since no one person is solely responsible for action. One or two individuals may do all the work and other members may merely "ride on their coat tails".
6. **Some students prefer to work alone.** Unless the benefits of group work are taught, some students may rather work alone. They may feel they can learn better alone. Some individuals may be shy, lack social skills, or feel they will not be accepted.

Most of these disadvantages can be overcome by effective use of the small group teaching method. This, of course, requires careful planning, instruction and monitoring.

Assessing Small Group Effectiveness

You can tell if a group is going well. The climate is positive, people are on task and seem to be enjoying themselves. Everybody seems involved and discussion does not "drag."

You can assess how well a group is going by asking key questions. These can form the basis of making the group more effective. You can ask yourself why a particular pattern or behavior occurs and what you can do about it.

1. **Influence and Leadership**
   - Does anybody seem left out?
   - Does somebody dominate?
   - Is there rivalry?
2. **Communication**
   - Who do people look at when they talk?
   - Who talks to whom? How long? Who interrupts?
   - Are there sub-groups (cliques)?
   - What is the style? (questions, gestures, statements, tone of voice)
3. **Decision-making**
   - How are decisions made? Consensus? Voting?
   - How do members react to the decisions made?
4. **Atmosphere**
   - Is the climate happy? Tense? Apathetic?
   - Does the group stay on topic?
   - Are efforts made to include and respect all?

Good luck with your small groups!

Adapted from: Lang, H., with McBeath, A. (In Progress). *Fundamental principles and practices of teaching: A practical theory-based approach to planning and instruction.* Toronto: Holt, Rinehart & Winston. Used with permission.